GMA to kick off campaign with 4-hour prayer vigil

Story below, Col. 3

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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Saturday, January 3, 2004 ★★ ~~40~~ 44 pages / 4 sections / vol. 19 / no. 26 P15

HIT OR MISS. Check out the final opposition Senate line-up of the Poe-Legarda team under the banner of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

PIMENTEL

OSMEÑA

SANTIAGO

ENRILE

HERRERA

TATAD

DILANGALEN

MARCOS

PADILLA

LIM

MADRIGAL

RASUL

Poe is a self-made media industry

By PDI Research

FROM THE simple movie actor that he was when he first started, Fernando Poe Jr. has transformed himself into a veritable media industry, being a multi-awarded actor, director, scriptwriter and producer. He has starred in pictures that he also wrote, directed and produced and won awards for.

While at it, he joined the ranks of the

POE/ A6

Estrada supporters want Loren apology

'We could not forget Legarda's role in Erap's ouster'

By Armand N. Nocum
and Michael Lim Ubac

INSTEAD of closing, the rift in the opposition widened yesterday, with opposition factions continuing to take aim at opposition vice presidential candidate Loren Legarda.

One pro-Estrada group called on Legarda, the senate majority leader whom movie actor Fernando Poe Jr. chose as his running mate, to apologize in public for her role in the ouster of President Joseph Estrada three years ago.

"We respect Poe's decision to pick her as his running mate but we could not forget her role in the Estrada ouster," Arnold Obina of the People's Alliance for Truth and Justice said in a radio interview. His group said it was demanding a public apology from Legarda before it will decide to support her.

Another pro-Estrada group, the People's Movement Against Poverty, said it would back only Poe and oppose any candidate who played a role in Estrada's removal.

Von Mesina, PMAP deputy secretary general, said their support for Poe does not include Legarda.

Although they have set to convene a meeting of field leaders, Mesina said he foresees that Legarda would be a "hard sell" as far as their group was concerned.

"Our sectoral and geographic leaders see the elections as a struggle between Edsa Dos and Edsa Tres forces. Legarda definitely belongs to Edsa Dos," Mesina said in a telephone interview.

Edsa II led to Estrada's ouster,

ESTRADA/ A14

A BLOCKBUSTER showing at the Comelec on Friday stars Fernando Poe Jr. together with his vice president, Sen. Loren Legarda, when he files his certificate of candidacy for president in the May 10 election. Also starring was Poe's off-screen leading lady, wife Susan Roces. *(More pictures inside)* RUDY ESPERAS

FPJ's Senate slate springs a few surprises

By Christine O. Avendaño

EVEN though it had been long anticipated, movie actor Fernando Poe Jr.'s Senate slate still managed to spring a few surprises.

The final list of 12 candidates, announced yesterday, did not include ex-San Juan mayor Jinggoy Estrada, the son of the former president. *(See story below.)*

But it included House Minority Leader Carlos Padilla Jr., a leading supporter of Sen. Panfilo Lacson's candidacy.

The senatorial ticket of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) also did not include Sen. Teresa Aquino-Oreta and ex-senator Ernesto Maceda, both previously considered shoo-ins. It also did not include any show business personalities.

But the ticket listed three candidates who were also being sought by the administration: ex-Interior Secretary Alfredo Lim, ex-Sen. Ernesto Herrera and former National Youth Commission chair Amina Rasul-Bernardo.

Padilla, coalition members said, was the only one whom Poe himself endorsed.

The other candidates included reelectionist Senators Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and John Osmeña; former Senators Juan Ponce Enrile and Francisco Tatad; Representatives Didagen Dilangalen (Maguindanao)

FPJ'S/ A13

Thousands mob 'Da King' at Comelec

By Martin P. Marfil

MOVIE icon Fernando Poe Jr. registered as a presidential candidate in the coming May elections yesterday, mobbed by thousands of fans, snarling traffic and bringing work in the area to a standstill.

The 64-year-old Poe arrived at the Commission on Elections (Comelec) escorted by his vice presidential running mate, the photogenic Senator-broadcaster Loren Legarda, who also registered her candidacy, and his wife, former movie queen Susan Roces.

Popularly known simply by his acronym "FPJ," Poe, along with Legarda waved triumphantly to the crowds from a balcony before registering as a candidate of the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (Coalition for United Filipinos).

THOUSANDS/ A14

Politicians take note: 84-M Pinoys

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE COUNTRY'S population, already one of the fastest growing in Asia, is expected to breach the 84-million mark this year and, if left unchecked, could balloon to 170 million in less than 30 years, the Commission on Population (PopCom) said.

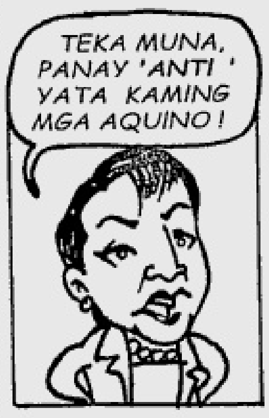
PopCom executive director Tomas Osias said that at a growth rate of 2.36 percent every year, 1.6 million to 2 million Filipinos would be added to the current estimate of 82 million.

Osias urged presidential candidates to present their platform concerning population management because this was an issue that affects everything else.

The 2004 projected popula-

POLITICIANS / A6

Tessie opts out; Jinggoy shut out


TEKA MUNA, PANAY 'ANTI' YATA KAMING MGA AQUINO!

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE (DANCE) halls of Congress will never be the same.

Sen. Teresa Aquino-Oreta yesterday said she won't run for reelection in May, to "preserve the unity" of the Aquino clan.

Oreta is supporting the presidential bid of movie actor Fernando Poe Jr., while her brother, Makati Rep. Agapito "Butz" Aquino, is backing that of Sen. Panfilo Lacson. Her uncle, ex-Tarlac Rep. Herminio Aquino, is the running mate of ex-Sen. Raul Roco.

Oreta became controversial when, after the vote on the second Jose Velarde envelope during the Estrada impeachment trial in January 2001, she danced a victory jig in the Senate.

She was not the only politician whose non-exclusion in the Senate lineup of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) came as a surprise.

In San Juan, former mayor Jinggoy

TESSIE/ A13

GMA to kick off campaign with prayer vigil

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo begins her quest for a full six-year term in Malacañang with a lot of prayers.

The President herself will lead the four-hour prayer vigil that will kick off the grand production being planned for the formal announcement of her candidacy on Monday.

The President's campaign symbols, including her two-thumbs up hand signal, will be introduced to the public in a program where she will present her team of candidates, consisting of her vice presidential running mate Sen. Noli de Castro and 12 senatorial candidates, according to Conrado "Dodi" Limcaoco, the presidential adviser on media and religious affairs.

"She is the one who wants it. For every major event in her life, she has always faced it with prayers," said Limcaoco.

Ms Macapagal, who faces the supposedly formidable ticket of popular movie actor Fernando Poe Jr. and Sen. Loren Legarda, will go to the Manila Cathedral for a prayer vigil that will last from 3:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. on Monday, the last day for the filing of certificates of candidacy.

The liturgical vigil, to be offered for Jesus and Mary, will be followed

GMA/ A6

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao will have cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers. SOURCE PAGASA

COMPILED BY: ARMIN ADINA, PDI RESEARCH/01/03/04

Metro Manila	Partly cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with rains
Baguio	Partly cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with rains
Tuguegarao	Partly cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with rains
Laoag	Partly cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with rains
Clark Zone	Partly cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with rains
Tagaytay	Partly cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with rains
Legazpi	Partly cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with rains
Calapan	Partly cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with rains

4 cops face ax for New Year firing

By Christian V. Esguerra and Blanche S. Rivera

FOR FOUR policemen, 2004 will certainly not bring cheer after they were arrested for indiscriminately firing their guns during the New Year festivities.

Arrested were SPO2 Nicanor Ragadio of the Zambales provincial police office, PO3 Nicolas Jadol of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group in Davao City, PO3 Arnel Dilag of the Palimbang municipal police office and PO1 Jennifer Jib Antonio of Isabela.

The four face dismissal from the service and imprisonment for their offense.

Director Avelino Razon, police director for operations, said the officers even used their service pistols which they fired off on the night of Dec. 31.

"The suspects will all be charged with illegal discharge of firearms which carries a long prison term," said Senior Supt. Joel Goltiao, police information officer.

Ragadio was reportedly drunk when he fired his gun at around 9 p.m. on Wednesday, prompting members of the Olongapo police to arrest him.

Warning shot

Jadol allegedly fired a warning shot while accosting a man who had purportedly slapped his son shortly before midnight.

Antonio allegedly fired off several shots at around 9 p.m. in Barangay Arellano, Quezon, Isabela.

Razon also said that operatives of the Eastern Police District arrested Gary Lee, a dismissed member of the Marikina police force with the rank of PO3, for indiscriminate firing.

Security guards Noli Tacmo and Joel Ytang are also in hot water for a similar offense.

Ytang was on duty when he allegedly fired his revolver while drinking at a construction site in Pasig City. It was still unclear what triggered Tacmo to fire his .38-cal. revolver shortly after midnight.

Razon said he had ordered all police units to collect slugs recovered from the victims of stray bullets. He said the slugs would be compared with the guns of those arrested so police could determine who among the suspects had hit a particular victim.

One person was killed while 20 others were wounded by stray bullets nationwide on New Year's Eve.

Tetanus threat

As this developed, the Department of Health yesterday warned of a possible tetanus epidemic if victims of firecracker explosions were not immunized immediately.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said that public hospitals, particularly the San Lazaro Hospital, usually experiences an influx of tetanus cases at this time due to untreated wounds caused by firecrackers.

Dayrit urged victims to immediately get anti-tetanus shots even for minor injuries because this could lead to a tetanus, which has a fatality rate of 10 to 60 percent.

"People who were injured and did not get tetanus shots would fall ill and normally it begins with the hardening of the muscles," Dayrit said, adding that even with minor injuries, if the wounds were deep enough, infection could set in.

Arturo Cabanban, San Lazaro Hospital director, said that around 35 people were admitted to the hospital every January before the DOH went full blast in its Oplan Iwas Paputok campaign.

There were only 10 tetanus cases related to firecracker injuries in the first month last year, Cabanban said.

Injuries rise

The DOH recorded a total of 531 injuries due to firecrackers, including *watusi*, and stray bullets in 2002, but the figures rose to 590 last year with the proliferation of cheap and low quality firecrackers. This was the first time that firecracker injuries rose since 1999.

Dayrit said the DOH expects more injuries to be reported as the 590 cases represented only those recorded from 7 a.m. of Dec. 21 to 7 a.m. of Jan. 1. Hospitals would be updating their reports by Monday.

"What we're guarding against now is the rise of tetanus cases in January. Those who had injuries should get shots. It's not very expensive," Dayrit said.

Tetanus cases have an incubation period of two to three weeks, with symptoms such as lockjaw, stiffness of the muscles and convulsion in severe cases.

The DOH said that unless the government totally bans the sale of firecrackers, it would be hard to bring down the injuries below the 500 level.

2 more Betti Sy murder suspects fall in Leyte

By Christian V. Esguerra, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Alcuin Papa

TWO ALLEGED kidnappers of Coca-Cola executive Betti Chua Sy were arrested in Leyte Thursday but denied participation in her abduction and killing.

Fernando S. Niegas and Leo Garrido, said to be members of the Waray kidnap gang, however, admitted their role as safehouse caretakers in the abduction of four Chinese nationals.

Police, however, believe Niegas was the mastermind of the Sy kidnap-slay and is reportedly the number three man of the Waray-Waray kidnap gang.

President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said the arrest of the mastermind in Sy's kidnapping and murder was a good omen.

"The arrest of Fernando Niegas which came on New Year's Day is a sign and an assurance that the country's peace and order situation will continue to look up in 2004," Ms Macapagal said in a statement.

"I commend the Naktf and all its allied units for this latest accomplishment," said the President who took note of the dramatic drop in criminality since Dec. 9 and the string of successful apprehensions of known criminals.

Niegas and Garrido also admitted they knew the gang members who snatched and accidentally killed the Coke executive in Quezon City in November, said Chief Supt. Dionisio Coloma Jr., Eastern Visayas police director.

Niegas and Garrido were arrested in Barangay Macanip in Jaro, Leyte, at around 11 a.m. the other day on a tip provided by a Leyte resident.

Elements of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Naktf) had surrounded the hideout of Garrido in Barangay Macanit, Jaro, Leyte. Garrido's wife managed to convince the suspect to turn himself in.

Coloma said Niegas has a standing arrest warrant for frustrated murder.

Coloma said a special operations group including members of Naktf was still hunting down at least 10 suspects implicated by Niegas and Garrido in the Sy case.

Director Avelino Razon, police director for operations, yesterday said Niegas was the number three man of the Allan Niegas kidnap gang whose leader was arrested on Dec. 4. The Niegas gang was said to be a splinter group of the Waray group.

But Niegas and Garrido claimed during interrogation that they were mere "errand boys" of the gang, Coloma said.

"They said they were merely tasked to deliver food and look after their group's victims in safe houses," the official told the Inquirer in a telephone interview.

Coloma said he and his men were not buying the two suspects' claim, especially after they found out that Niegas was constructing a new house in Barangay Macanip. The suspect had admitted having spent at least P300,000 for the two-bedroom bungalow.

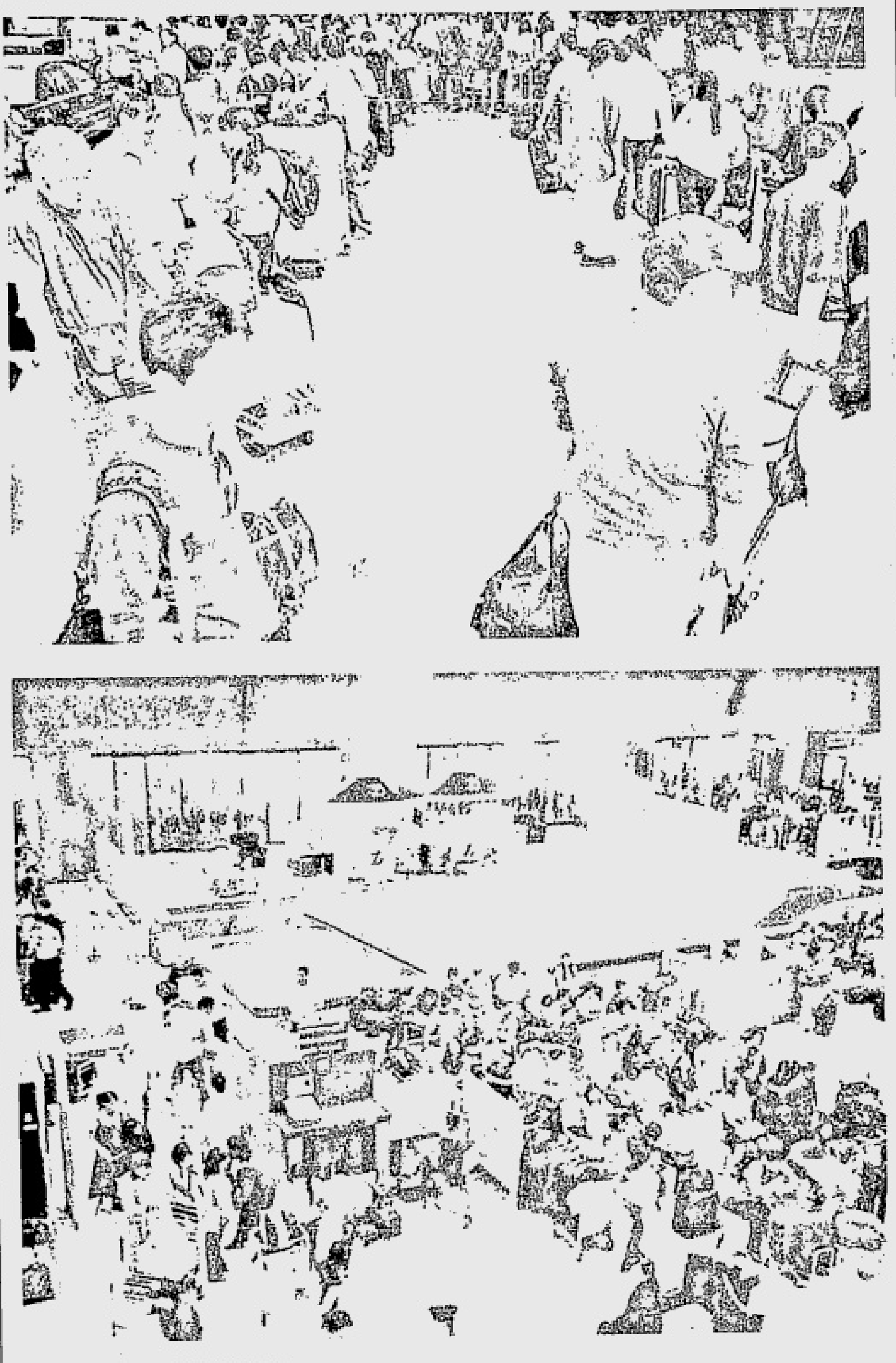
The arrest of Niegas and Garrido brought to at least 10 the number of suspects arrested in connection with the Sy abduction.

"With their arrest," said Coloma, "the mystery has become much clearer."

The Naktf had its break when a certain Roger went to the Paranaque police two days after the kidnapping and admitted he had driven the victim to his group's safe house in Cavite.

The tip led to the arrest of two suspects in the Cavite hideout and three others in Sta. Mesa, Manila.

Next to Allan Niegas who had a P1-million price tag on his head, the biggest catch was Eliseo Saliente who admitted accidentally shooting Sy.



POST-HOLIDAY CRUSH

Departing *balikbayans*, tourists and overseas workers form snaking queues as they crowd the cramped departure wing of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (top), a stark contrast to the scene in another part of the lobby where a new upscale coffee shop has carved out a huge space for itself in a new concession approved by Naia general manager Edgardo Manda (background, above). ROGER MARGALLO

Air marshals to guard PAL flights

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE PHILIPPINES is willing to deploy air marshals aboard Philippine Airlines flights to the United States as long as American airlines entering Philippine territory also have armed marshals on board.

"We are prepared to deploy air marshals on PAL planes entering US territory as requested, on the basis of reciprocity," President Macapagal-Arroyo said yesterday, adding that she wanted US flights to the Philippines to be "similarly covered so that we can have a two-way system to check terrorist incursions."

"This is important for the safety of our own nationals as well as foreign travellers and is part of our commitment to the global fight against terror," Ms Macapagal added.

The US Federal Aviation Administration earlier issued an emergency directive requiring all international air carriers to place armed sky marshals on flights deemed by US officials to be at risk of possible terror attack.

PAL, which will expand its US destinations to five this year, has agreed to abide by the US FAA directive that covers all cargo and passenger flights to the US.

The Philippines will continue to provide "seamless security" to air travellers on both the ground and the air, Ms Macapagal said.

The Philippines has been one of the firmest Asian allies in the US-led "war against terror" and US military assistance, has helped beef up local counterterrorism capabilities.

Local allies of the al-Qaida and Jemaah Islamiyah terror networks are known to have been active in the country. *With an AFP report*

Threats to RP come from within, says ex-DFA exec

By Jerome Aning

THE THREAT to the Philippines' existence as an independent state will not come from a military invasion but from three sources—the uncertain extent of the country's maritime boundaries, home-grown terrorism and eroding economic competitiveness.

Former Department of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Rodolfo Severino, secretary general of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in 1998-2002, gave this assessment during a recent seminar on Philippine foreign policy in the 21st century.

Severino said these threats must be addressed with coherent policies, close coordination among government agencies and strong leadership at the top.

Currently a professor at the Asian Institute of Management's Center for Development Management, Severino described as "dangerous" the Philippines' conflicting maritime claims against China and the dispute over the Spratly Islands.

Difficult, dangerous

He said attempts to settle the issues "would always be difficult, but without a definitive determination of the extent of the country's territorial sea and exclusive economic zone, we cannot know how far into the ocean we can and must enforce our laws.

"This situation is dangerous; unresolved jurisdictions always present the danger of armed conflict. As it is, foreign fishing vessels and spy ships run around our declared EEZ with impunity," he said.

The threats to Philippine waters, he added, were compounded by the difficulty of patrolling an archipelagic country with an ill-equipped navy and air force.

In 2002, Asean and China agreed on a code of conduct for the South China Sea.

Severino, however, asked how the Philippines could detect violations of the code without modern military technology.

The second threat—home-grown terrorism—is largely connected to the separatist movement in the southern Philippines, according to Severino.

Address grievances

He said the grievances of Muslim Filipinos and other minorities must be addressed, while seeking the cooperation of other countries in plugging foreign support for local terrorists must be conducted through "adroit diplomacy."

"Terrorism has to be combated as a basically national endeavor and by largely national means. All legal enforcement measures have to be taken to put down this national menace," he said.

The AIM professor said the third threat to the country comes from eroding competitiveness, particularly in the fierce rivalry for investments.

Philippine diplomacy, he said, had the responsibility of projecting the country as a good investment risk and persuading foreign investors to come in.

He, however, said that image-making and persuasion could not be launched on solid ground if the reality of the country's investment environment did not improve.

What investors want

He enumerated what both Filipino and non-Filipino investors look for in a country: sound trade policy, consistency and predictability of policy, political stability, law and order, absence or reasonable level of corruption, rule of law, and adequate transport and communications systems.

Severino said foreign policy and public relations officials should see the three threats as opportunities to seek solutions.

The region is experiencing "a rare period of calm," which is an opportunity to settle the Philippines' territorial sea claims in a way that is acceptable to the international community and in accordance with international law.

The domestic roots of home-grown terrorism—past and present injustice, alienation and deprivation of dignity—could be tackled now "with a full sense of national responsibility" so that they would not fester and merge with international terrorism trends.

No choice

Growing global competitiveness, meanwhile, could be solved by joining regional and bilateral free trade areas.

"The Philippines has no choice. Large continent-sized countries are surging; smaller markets, including our neighbors, are coalescing into larger ones, and there is nothing we can do about it except to join the trend and strengthen ourselves for the competition that will, in any case, become fiercer."

Severino said the best foreign policy is domestic reform and decisive action on national issues. Whether dealing with international threats or seizing international opportunities, he said, making national decisions and taking the necessary action were absolutely essential.

The seminar was sponsored by the Philippine Ambassadors Foundation, the Department of Foreign Affairs' Foreign Service Institute and the Philippine Council for Foreign Relations in cooperation with Germany's Hanns Seidel Foundation.

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Create Compose an MMS message by adding text to the picture you took.

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Millennium babes: Happy, healthy for most part

Two toddlers, two different worlds

WHEN Voughn Abuda and Andrew Flores came into this world, the world was new again.

The two boys, precocious and playful as any 3-year-olds, are midnight's children, born on the dawn of the new millennium.

But their paths could not be more different.

Voughn was born at 12:01 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2000 to a middle-class family from Marikina.

Andrew followed a few seconds after to a poor couple from Las Piñas City.

If Richard Abuda had his way, he would like a future only of success and abundance without any hardships for his son Voughn.

"I would like him to be a lawyer or a doctor. That is a good way to have a good future," says Richard.

When the INQUIRER visited, Voughn was looking a little sullen because of the death of his .pet rabbit. But the boy was soon distracted by his toy guns, gifts that he got for Christmas.

The parents of Voughn moved the child and his three other siblings out of their old home in Cubao, Quezon City to the quieter and mountainous haven of San Mateo, Rizal.

Richard believes Vough's birth has brought him luck.

"When he was born, there was a lot of blessings and I had a lot of luck with my career. Everything I wanted and prayed for came my way in terms of my employment," he says.

The only blight in the otherwise ideal life of the Abuda family is the decision of Voughn's mother, Rosita, 32, to relocate to her native Bicol together with Voughn's three siblings.

The couple shares the raising of Voughn, though. "We married young and I have to be father and mother to Voughn," Richard says proudly as he makes his way to the kitchen to make a snack for a yelling and hungry Voughn.

ABUDA

Ariston Flores could not be by his wife's side when she delivered their third child Andrew.

Flores, 37, and a truck driver for a construction company, had to make a delivery that night. He and his wife Francisca, 32, had just come from his boss' house in Bacoor, Cavite when she started to feel birth pains.

Coincidentally, Andrew and Francisca share the same Jan. 1 birthday.

"We were not expecting him to be born that night. But he came anyway," says Ariston with a smile.

Unfortunately, Andrew did not win the DOH's search for 21st-century babies and the prizes that came with the award.

"That's too bad. They [scholarships and health plans] would have helped us a lot with raising Andrew," Ariston says.

The Floreses make their home in the working-class San Isidro area in Barangay Almanza Uno, Las Piñas City.

Life has not been easy for the family since Andrew arrived.

On March 21, disaster struck the Flores home. An electric fan short-circuited, igniting a fire that burned down the house. Luckily, the fire didn't spread to other houses and Ariston managed to salvage some of their belongings.

Despite the trials, there are a few things Ariston and his family can look forward to. When the INQUIRER visited, Ariston had just emerged from a nap as he was not working that day. Francisca was doing the nails of one of the relatives who live with them and Andrew, toting a toy gun, was playing outside with his siblings. The family looked happy. *Alcuin Papa*

Daddy's girl is lucky charm

CEBU CITY—It has been four years since baby Gladys Patron's birth and this frisky toddler remains oblivious to her good fortune.

Except for the constant hugs, cuddles and kisses, this little girl is also happily unaware that her parents consider her their "lucky charm."

Judith, Gladys' mother, says their family has been made better since Gladys came into their life.

Gladys, known to everyone in the neighborhood as "Baby Millenia," was the first baby born in Cebu City at the turn of the millennium.

Baby Millenia was given an education trust fund worth P50,000 by the Rotary Club of Cebu City which she will be able to use when she reaches the age of 16.

Aside from the educational plan, Gladys also gets free medical checkups at the Chong Hua Hospital where Briones is a medical consultant. She is also given vitamins and immunization free of charge. Sometimes the privilege extends to Gladys' siblings.

"I don't know but my youngest seems to be our lucky charm. Since she came into our life, we have been getting blessings. We are not rich but we are healthy and we can cope with our everyday needs. We even acquired a lot and built a home," she says.

The family has since moved to Nivel Hills, Lahug, where they were able to construct a house in Nivel Hills despite the modest income that Jonathan brings in as a security guard.

Judith says Gladys is a "daddy's girl." She expects her father to cuddle her as soon as he arrives from work.

The precocious and articulate Gladys apparently already knows what she wants.

When asked what her interests were, she quickly replied that she wanted to become a policewoman when she grows up.

She said she preferred guns and cars to dolls and playhouses. *Jolene R. Bulambot, PDI Visayas Bureau*

DE LEON

Will Milenia get to go to college?

CALASIAO, Pangasinan—At the Region I Medical Center in Dagupan City, baby Milenia Decena de Leon was the toast of the hospital as cameras clicked and every member of the staff milled about her while congratulating her parents Romulo and Leticia.

Born in the first minutes of Jan. 1, 2000, Milenia was recognized as one of two millennium babies in the Department of Health's search for 21st Century Babies in 2000.

But like a shooting star, Milenia's shining moment was brief. After all the attention, it was time to return home to a wooded secluded village of Lumbang in this town.

Sadly, her father Romulo, a retired Calasiao policeman, died of cancer in November 2002.

"(Milenia) was the apple of her father's eye," her mother Leticia said. "They loved playing together."

Milenia, now a healthy preschooler, refused to talk with the INQUIRER,. but merely shook her head or nodded when asked a question.

Leticia, however, said Milenia could be quite talkative when there are no strangers around.

Leticia said she is planning to enroll Milenia at their village's day care center next school year.

"Her father wanted her to enroll in a school in town but I cannot afford that anymore. The daily fare would just be too much," Leticia said.

She also dreads the day her children will enter college.

She is thankful that the College Assurance Plan, one of the prizes Milenia won, entitles her to enroll in any exclusive college or university.

CAP will pay the tuition and other school fees but the cost of books, uniforms and school allowance will be borne by the family.

"I pray and hope that I can provide for her other needs," Leticia said. *Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

ORTIZ

Dad misses his birthday again

DAVAO CITY—Patrick Mille Ortiz was the millennium baby born at the stroke of midnight on Jan. 1, 2000 at the San Pedro Hospital here.

Now 4, Patrick has his father's features and his mother's complexion. He is about to enter school next year.

When the INQUIRER visited at his residence in Country Homes Subdivision, in Buhangin District, Patrick was too shy to entertain his unexpected visitors.

But his mother, Helen, said Patrick is always like that whenever he meets people for the first time.

Patrick is tall for his age. He looks like a 6-year-old. "Three *na ako... malapit na* birthday *ko... mag*-four *na ako*," he said Patrick as he counted off four fingers.

Patrick had asked his mother for a cake with a toy train on it and balloons for his birthday.

Born to Roger and Helen Ortiz, Patrick was named after a priest-friend with Mille coming from the word millennium.

The first child of the couple, Patrick was named the millennium baby by the city government. With it came a P50,000 cash prize and a P10,000 bonus. The money was deposited in Patrick's savings account.

Helen said Patrick also got one-year free immunization from Pasteur Merreux Connaught, a pharmaceutical company. He also received a two-year supply of disposable diapers from Pampers.

Part of his prize was an educational scholarship. But Helen said she has not followed up on it for the last two years after she was told to wait when Patrick reaches school age.

Helen said Patrick tells her he wants to build houses when he grows up, prompting her to get the boy a college education plan.

Helen works with Premier Insurance while Roger is a seaman. He has been away from home for a year now.

According to Helen, Roger was out of the country during Patrick's first and third birthdays. "Now, he won't be home again," she said. *PDI Mindanao Bureau*

SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

JUDICIAL ETHICS—Prompt disposition of cases—Indeed, we have repeatedly warned judges to dispose of court business promptly, resolve pending incidents and motions, and decide cases within the prescribed periods for "delay in the disposition of cases erodes the faith and confidence of our people in the judiciary, lowers its standards and brings it into disrepute." Such exhortation is in fact enshrined in Sec. 15, par. (1), Art. VIII, of our Constitution, as well as in Rule 3.05, Canon 3, of the Code of Judicial Conduct, which mandates that a magistrate should dispose of the court's business promptly and decide cases within the required periods. For violations thereof we have invariably imposed penalties ranging from fine to suspension depending on the circumstances of each case as the number of motions or cases unresolved, the presence of aggravating or mitigating circumstances, the damage suffered by the parties as a result of the delay, the health and age of the judge, etc. In the instant case, respondent Judge failed to act on a Motion to Dismiss and a consolidated Urgent Motion for Issuance of Preliminary Injunction and for Contempt of Court within a reasonable period from the time they were submitted for resolution on 28 January 2000. It was only after 20 months and notwithstanding a motion for early resolution filed in July 2000 that respondent Judge finally resolved the motions with an order of denial. Clearly, by no stretch of the imagination can such lengthy period of 20 months be considered as a "prompt" disposition of motions envisioned and mandated in the Code of Judicial Conduct. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Bellosillo, Second Division, Aslarona vs Echavez, A. M. No. RTJ-03-1803, October 2, 2003]

BY R. B. VERA

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, January 3, 2004
Week Before Epiphany

1st Reading: 1 Jn 2:29-3:6
Gospel: Jn 1:29-34

When John saw Jesus coming towards him, he said, "There is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. It is he of whom I said: A man comes after me who is already ahead of me, for he was before me. I myself did not know him, but I came baptizing to prepare for him, so that he might be revealed in Israel."

And John also gave this testimony, "I saw the Spirit coming down on him like a dove from heaven and resting on him. I myself did not know him but God who sent me to baptize told me: 'You will see the Spirit coming down and resting on the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' Yes, I have seen! and I declare that this is the Chosen One of God."

Commentary

Jesus is called "lamb of God" more than thirty times in the New Testament. The title has overtones of the Jewish annual Passover feast, when a yearling lamb was killed and eaten. This lamb became linked with the Exodus text (13:11-16) about the substitution of an animal for the first-born of every family.

It is an enduring image of Jesus. A lamb is a figure of innocence. "Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter-house, like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers, never opening its mouth" (Is 53:7). Sheep, let alone lambs, have no real means of self-defense. Before they were domesticated more than 10,000 years ago they could defend themselves by climbing to inaccessible places in the mountains, but since they came among us they are particularly at our mercy. One could say the same about the Lamb of God.

Claretian Publications Inc., 8 Mayumi St., UP Village, Diliman, Quezon City, UP P.O. Box 4, Diliman, 1101 Quezon City; Tel.: 921-3984; Fax: 921-7429; E-mail: cci@claret.org; Websites: http://www.bible.claret.org (Claretian Publications Inc.) & http://missionaries.claret.org (Claretians in the Philippines)

Ex-rebels get P840M in livelihood projects

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE GOVERNMENT and the United States Agency for International Development have provided some 21,000 former Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) rebels with P40,000 worth of agricultural projects each under a livelihood training program for rebel-returnees, Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. has said.

De Venecia confirmed with US Ambassador to the Philippines Francis Ricciardone that the livelihood program alone has already cost P840 million.

Another P160 million, he said, would be spent to train the remaining 4,000 MNLF regulars who were demobilized following a peace agreement between the government and the secessionist group led by detained Nur Misuari, former governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

De Venecia said the livelihood projects consisted of the distribution of hybrid varieties of rice and corn, seaweed projects and special farm training that cost $850 for every recipient-trainee.

He said the successful livelihood program could hasten the drafting of a final peace agreement between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front(MILF), the remaining secessionist movement in Mindanao.

"This is a major attraction for the MILF," said De Venecia whose recent peace missions in Kuala Lumpur and Tripoli laid the groundwork for the final round of peace talks between the secessionist front and the government this year.

De Venecia called the livelihood program the "best insurance" that the US government would do the same once the MILF concludes a final peace agreement with the government.

Bush earlier committed about $30 million in a post-conflict aid package for the reconstruction of Mindanao.

De Venecia said international aid agencies are expected to follow suit.

"This will trigger a mini-Marshall Plan for Muslim Mindanao that will also benefit Christians and lumad tribal communities," he said.

The remaining 4,000 ex-MNLF regulars will be given assistance starting next year. The program will be completed in 2005.

De Venecia and Ricciardone said the livelihood training program was part of a global effort to strengthen parliamentary democracy in Muslim communities and to provide leadership training programs for Muslim youths.

Pinoy killed in Singapore pub row

A 35-YEAR-OLD Filipino interior designer was slashed to death by a bartender while celebrating the New Year in a Singapore bar before dawn Thursday.

Media reports identified the fatality as Antonio M. Austria, an employee of Home Success, a home renovation firm. He left a wife and three children in the Philippines.

According to The Straits Times, policemen were summoned at around 2 a.m. to the Paramount Shopping Centre in Singapore's Katong district where they found Austria lying on the ground bleeding from deep cuts in the neck.

Austria was taken to the Singapore General Hospital where he died about an hour later.

CNA said a 21-year-old Chinese bartender was arrested in the killing. Witnesses said the bartender and Austria got into a fist-fight during which the suspect slashed the victim in the neck with a piece of broken glass.

Jerome Aning

Supreme Court asked to bar road overprice case petition

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE OMBUDSMAN has asked the Supreme Court to dismiss a petition to stop the prosecution of 27 government officials charged with graft for the alleged overprice of the President Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard, a 5.1-km asphalt road in the Manila Bay reclamation area.

In a 136-page comment, the Ombudsman, through the Office of the Special Prosecutor, asked the high tribunal to junk the petitions for certiorari and for a temporary restraining order of former Public Estates Authority (PEA) chair Francisco San Juan, deputy general manager Manuel Berina Jr., assistant general manager Jaime Millan, deputy manager Bernardo Viray and project management officer Raphael Pocholo Zorillo.

The Ombudsman filed graft charges against the five PEA officials and 22 others before the Sandiganbayan last July for the overpriced road project that cost the government P532.92 million "at the very least."

The five officials then asked the high court to intervene and junk the finding of probable cause against them. But the Office of the Special Prosecutor disagreed.

The alleged overprice involved two portions of the boulevard (measuring about 2.3 kilometers at Pacific Avenue and at the opposite end at Buendia Avenue) that were assigned to JD Legaspi Construction, one of the three firms that built the road.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio noted that PEA had paid JD Legaspi P837.3 million for a 2.3-km, eight-lane asphalt road.

"The other two contractors, however, spent less than the combined amount of P300 million for the portions awarded to them. The two built the remaining portions of the controversial asphalt road, including two bridges,...which are more than half the project. The work done by these two contractors, just like the non-adjacent portions done by JD Legaspi Construction, involved the same stretch of road," he said.

The two other contractors were Shoemart Inc. and Wenceslao/R-I Consortium.

Villa-Ignacio also said the contract for the project was flawed from the start due to "several blatant irregularities."

He also questioned the manner by which the project was bidded out.

Shell hikes diesel price

OIL giant Pilipinas Shell raised pump prices of its diesel fuel by 30 centavos per liter effective midnight last night.

The oil firm cited the additional cost of marketing diesel compliant with the Clean Air Act as the reason for the first price hike of the year.

Under the law, oil firms should sell diesel containing 0.05 percent of sulfur instead of the current 0.5 percent beginning this month.

Shell spokesperson Robert Kanapi said this entailed additional cost for the company.

As early as November, oil companies have been selling CAA-compliant diesel products to Metro Manila motorists, who account for 40 percent of the country's total diesel consumption.

Despite the price increase, Kanapi assured operators of public utility vehicles they would still be entitled to discounts on diesel products at selected Shell outlets in Metro Manila. *Abigail L. Ho*

General who probed Oakwood mutiny forced to retire early

THE MILITARY Inspector General, who led the investigation of over 300 disgruntled young officers and men who mounted the July 27 Oakwood mutiny, has been "forced to retire" much earlier than his mandatory retirement date in August.

Lt. Gen. Librado Ladia is stepping down on Jan. 5, seven months before Aug. 17, the day he reaches the mandatory military retirement age of 56, according to a reliable source who asked not to be named.

Malacañang officials were reportedly able to convince Ladia to retire early after Maj. Gen. Alberto Braganza of the National Capital Region Command (NCRC) asked to be promoted to the rank of three-star general, the highly placed source said.

The NCRC requires a three-star general at its helm, but Braganza couldn't be promoted as long as the 11 positions occupied by three-star generals, including Ladia, were occupied.

By law, the military should have only 11 three-star generals. These are the vice chief of staff, the deputy chief of staff, the three major service commanders, five area commanders and the inspector general.

Example

Ladia, a member of Philippine Military Academy Class '72, declined to issue a statement.

The source said that by asking Ladia to retire early, Malacañang was setting "a bad example," particularly to the soldiers who had staged the Oakwood mutiny in order to draw attention to the need for reforms in the military.

But Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia, vice chief of staff, maintained that Ladia had filed for early retirement, saying "he had indicated a preference to retire early. I don't think he was forced to retire."

"I don't know if some people talked to him about it. But whether or not they did, it was still his decision (to make). You can't force somebody to retire," Garcia said.

Wrong

Braganza, for his part, denied that he had lobbied for a promotion, saying "that's wrong information. I never asked for a promotion in my 32 years of service in the military. My record speaks for itself."

Ladia was reportedly summoned to Malacañang twice by a Cabinet official last October and was offered a government position in exchange for retiring ahead of schedule. He turned down the offer, the source said.

When the overtures for him to retire did not stop, he proposed that he be relieved as inspector general but still be allowed to retire in August. He was rebuffed, however, the source said.

"Due to the extreme pressure," Ladia finally agreed in November to retire early, but stood by his decision not to accept a government job, the source said.

TJ Burgonio

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MITSUBISHI MOTORS

THE EMBRACE of Imelda Villarosa, a grateful resident of Payatas V in Quezon City, highlights President Macapagal's visit to inspect the water supply in the poor barangay.

MALACAÑANG PHOTO

GMA to kick off campaign with 4-hour prayer vigil

From page A1

by a 7:30 a.m. Mass to be officiated by Monsignor Cervo, the parish priest of the Manila Cathedral.

Limcaoco said the President will be joined by the other candidates on her team, some Cabinet officials, local officials, and representatives of various sectoral groups "and whoever wants to join the President in praying."

He expects De Castro to have a "very visible presence" in the liturgical activities.

After the vigil and the morning Mass, the President and her team will walk to Plaza Roma for the "short program."

'Two thumbs up'

Limcaoco said the President's campaign symbols, including her hand signal, jingle, colors, slogan, streamers and even ring tones would be presented by the Spice Boys, the group of young congressmen led by Bukidnon Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri and the President's campaign spokesperson, Mike Defensor.

Ms Macapagal's chosen hand signal was "two thumbs up," made by extending both hands forward with the two thumbs thrust upward.

It is a variation of the thumbs-up signal that was used by former President Ramos in his successful presidential campaign in 1992 and throughout his six-year term.

Limcaoco said the "two thumbs up" signal signifies "continuity, same direction and more."

Fast-rising star Sarah Geronimo has been asked to sing the national anthem during the program.

'President Gloria'

Other Malacañang sources said the President will not be using her initials GMA but "President Gloria" in her campaign.

And being the incumbent President, Ms Macapagal will be using the colors of the Philippine flag—red, white, blue and yellow—Limcaoco said.

Ms Macapagal earlier expressed a preference for powder blue because she said it was the color of the Virgin Mary.

'I will survive'

The President will not only be employing several campaign jingles, including Gloria Estefan's "I will survive," she will also be using ring tones.

Zubiri earlier said the President's youth arm was buying the rights to use the popular "Ocho-Ocho" song-and-dance hit for her campaign jingle.

After the 20-minute program, the President will lead a "kapit-bisig" march to the Commission on Elections office of Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos to file their certificates of candidacy.

Ms Macapagal will then give a luncheon press conference at Tamayo's restaurant near the Manila Cathedral.

Hundreds of supporters are expected to be brought to the site to witness the filing and presentation of administration candidates.

Final 12

But three days before the deadline, the administration party has yet to finalize its senatorial slate and even the coalition that would be carrying the President's candidacy.

And while the campaign symbols are known, Malacañang officials could not say what the President's campaign slogan and the name of her national ticket would be.

Ms Macapagal and House Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., Lakas-CMD chair and president respectively, campaign manager Gabriel Claudio, Defensor and other officials reportedly held several meetings yesterday to finalize the ticket.

But none of the officials could say who the final 12 senatorial candidates of the administration will be.

Defensor could name only Videogram Regulatory Board chair Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr., Sen. Robert Barbers, Sen. Robert Jaworski, former Trade Secretary Mar Roxas, Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan and lawyer Pia Cayetano as among those assured of inclusion in the ticket.

Infighting

Other officials said that Pampanga Gov. Lito Lapid, Lakas-CMD spokesperson Heherson Alvarez, former Defense Secretary Orlando Mercado, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon are also assured of inclusion.

Former Sen. Ernesto Herrera, former Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim and Amina Rasul-Bernardo, who were said to be in the administration's short list, reportedly were driven to accept an opposition draft because of the infighting in the administration team.

"If they filed with FPJ, there's nothing we can do," said Lakas executive director Joey Rufino, the presidential political liaison officer.

Claudio, the head of the selection committee, could not say who were being considered in their stead.

Alvarez case

Alvarez, the presidential adviser on overseas Filipinos, has protested an INQUIRER report that he was still thinking of whether to run for the Senate or seek a senior Cabinet position.

A ranking Lakas official had told the INQUIRER that Alvarez was on the short list but that he might settle for a Cabinet appointment.

"I am running for senator," Alvarez said.

Alvarez lamented that some party officials wanted him out of the slate when other personalities associated with detained former President Estrada were being given slots in the senatorial slate.

Alvarez refused to name names but he was apparently referring to Mercado, who served with Estrada.

Palace sources said Mercado was included in the slate because the President and some of her close advisers wanted to seek a reconciliation with Estrada.

Sources said presidential adviser Tomas Alcantara, Claudio and Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. were instrumental in bringing in Mercado despite objections from other officials against recruiting personalities associated with Estrada.

'Superior ticket'

Administration officials yesterday downplayed the perceived popularity of the opposition ticket of Poe and Legarda, saying the tandem of the President and De Castro was the "superior ticket" representing dignity, performance and experience.

Defensor said the 2004 elections would be a fight between the GMA-Noli and FPJ-Loren tickets.

He said the other opposition candidate, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, was not rating well in surveys.

He did not mention former Sen. Raul Roco, a consistent topnotcher in the voter preference surveys.

"We are confident about our team. We do not only have the winnability but the credibility, performance and track record for public service," Defensor said.

He said the President was not bothered by the FPJ-Loren tandem, "because we're better, we have a superior ticket, not only in terms of platform but even the personalities who have proven track record in excellent public service."

Upper hand

De Venecia said Ms Macapagal has the upper hand because, "whatever people say (about FPJ's popularity), President Arroyo still occupies the high moral and political ground.

"Popularity is OK but later on when they (the voters) search their soul and when they go to the ballot they will go for performance, achievement and experience," the Speaker said in a phone interview.

"We're more than confident that the administration ticket has a clear edge because the administration's performance in recent weeks has turned the tide for the President," De Venecia said, saying Ms Macapagal has been making "significant victories" against illegal drugs, kidnapping, gambling and terrorism.

"We have turned the tide against the problems of peace and order and on the matter of the economy we're now turning the corner," the Speaker said.

Marcos/Estrada issue

Claudio said the President was not afraid of facing Poe.

"We have faith in the people's discernment. We are confident that the people know what government and type of leaders are best during these trying times and that is the President's team," Claudio said in a phone interview.

A ranking Lakas official said the FPJ-Loren ticket would be weighed down by the Marcos and Estrada issues.

"(The FPJ-Loren ticket has) the formidable baggage of the Erap plunder case. It has the Marcos and Estrada groups and people who have been trying to bring down democratic governments since 1986," the official said.

Politicians take note: 84-M Pinoys

From page A1

tion is around 8 million more than the population four years ago, with 40 percent of Filipinos living below the poverty line.

"There is no indication that we will have a higher growth rate this year but this (2.36 percent) rate should already be given attention by our government because it negates our economic growth. Instead of making productive investments and savings, we spend everything on the needs of the population," Osias said in an earlier press briefing on population and reproductive health.

Poverty

PopCom data showed that poverty incidence rose along with the population, from 31.8 percent in 1997 to 33.7 percent in 2000, translating to 32 million poor Filipinos.

Osias also cited that those who were considered "chronic poor" had a mean family size of 6.1 while those who are transient poor had 5.3 and the "non-poor" had 4.78.

Big impact

"What we can say is whoever will win this election should address the population management concern because it has a very big impact on our economic development: food security, health, education, environment, housing," he said.

He admitted that the position of the administration to promote natural family planning methods and detach poverty incidence from population was "not too responsive" to the unmet needs of some Filipino couples.

Osias, whose office is under the Department of Health, said that while the natural methods are good, couples should also have alternatives.

There are around 20 million married couples in the country, although the latest State of the Philippine Population report showed that one out of three pregnancies were among teens, many of them unmarried.

According to the 2002 World Population Data Sheet, the Philippines ranked no. 13 among the world's largest countries with a density of 267 persons per square kilometer.

Poe is a self-made media industry

From page A1

country's self-made multimillionaires and CEOs.

In 1961, Ronald Allan Poe—who took the name of his brother for his screen name—established his first movie outfit, FPJ Productions, as a single proprietorship with P60,000 as capital.

FPJ Productions later registered itself as a corporation in May 1963 with Poe, his sister Elizabeth Poe Gutierrez and three others as incorporators.

The establishment of FPJ Productions made Poe the first of his generation of movie stars to become his own producer. Others who followed his lead in setting up their own movie companies were Joseph Estrada of JE Productions, Amalia Fuentes of AM Productions, Dolphy of RVQ Productions, Vilma Santos of VS Films and Nora Aunor of NV Productions.

In its forty-odd years of existence, FPJ Productions has established itself as an important movie production company and has remained active in the industry. It has outlived the big movie companies of the 1960s like Sampaguita Pictures, LVN and Premiere Productions.

Blockbusters

On its first year of production in 1962, FPJ Productions produced five movies—"Batang Maynila," "Callejon Once," "Ito ang Maynila," "Pasong Diablo" and "Albano Brothers."

Since then, it has produced an estimated 266 films, or roughly six to seven movies a year, making producer Poe a millionaire many times over as most of these films were blockbusters.

One of the company's biggest hits was "Ang Panday" which Poe also directed, using the name Ronwaldo Reyes, in 1979. The fantasy film was such a monstrous success that it was followed by three sequels, "Panday II" (1981), "Panday III" (1982) and "Panday IV" (1984).

An animated series based on the story of Panday was also produced for television.

Poe later branched into Jafere, D' Lanor ("Ronald" spelled backwards) and Rosas Productions which he formed with wife Jesusa Sonora, the popular movie star Susan Roces, in 1976. Rosas Production Inc., like FPJ Productions, was also engaged in the production and manufacture of motion picture films, television films, radio and stage presentations. Also listed as incorporators in its articles of incorporation are Jesus Sonora, Nestor Levy and Rosemarie Cruz.

In the mid-1980s, FPJ Productions entered into a contract with GMA Channel 7 for the television airing of all its films starring Fernando Poe Jr. The program was called FPJ sa GMA.

Real estate venture

In 2001, Poe and his wife ventured into a new business not related to the movies.

According to the publicly available records of the Security and Exchange Commission, Poe with his wife Jesusa, daughter Mary Grace P. Llamanzares, and Joseph Martin Sonora and Jeffrey Stevens Sonora, all with residential address at 23 Lincoln St. Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila, formed the 226 Wilson Development Corp. in August 2000.

The 226 Wilson Development Corp. is involved in developing, selling and leasing of real estate of all kinds, including buildings, houses, apartments and other structures.

The newly established company, whose registration was approved in March 2001, has an authorized capital stock of P170 million. Susan Roces or Jesusa Poe, as the elected treasurer signed an affidavit saying that at least 25 percent of the 25 percent authorized capital stock had been paid and credited to the new corporation's account.

She authorized the SEC and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to examine and verify the P5 million deposit of the company in the Greenhills branch of the Prudential Bank.

P77.8-M assets

Based on the company's financial statements filed with the SEC, the Poe family-owned company had total assets of P77.8 million as of Dec. 31, 2002. Its assets include a building with book value of P45.5 million and land with book value of P30 million. It also listed as part of its assets the deferred pre-operating cost of P4.9 million.

With total liabilities of P784,704, the company has a total net worth of P77.1 million.

The company reported a gross income of P1.3 million for the year ended Dec. 31, 2002. But given total maintenance, depreciation and operating costs of P4.3 million, it incurred a new loss of P3.1 million for its first year of operation.

The SEC's publicly available database did not yield any annual financial statements of FPJ Productions and Rosas Productions.

Taxes paid

The records section of the Quezon City government's taxes and fees division shows, however, that FPJ Productions has been faithfully paying its taxes. It showed gross sales of P17 million at the end of 2002.

The records show that the company last paid taxes on Aug. 20, 2003. It advanced P25,855.61 for its fourth quarter tax for 2003. The amount was based on the company's posted gross sales of P17 million at the end of 2002. On July 17, 2003, the company paid its 2003 third-quarter tax for the same amount.

Last May, the movie production company released the movie "Pakners" featuring Poe and billiards champion Efren "Bata" Reyes.

Foundations

SEC records also show that Poe was an incorporator with ex-President Estrada in two corporations. These are the Education Research & Assistance Program Foundation Inc. (Erap Foundation) and the Prof. Ernani J. Cuenco Music Foundation Inc. incorporated in May and July 1988, respectively.

Created in 1988, the Erap Foundation is devoted to providing scholarships to marginalized Filipino students. From the foundation's financial statements, it had P73,491,986.23 in total assets as of December 2002.

The Prof. Ernani J. Cuenco Music Foundation Inc. aims to provide assistance to undertake and support the study, promotion, development and propagation of Filipino music. No records of its financial statements could be found at the SEC.

Gourmet food

SEC records also show that Ronald Allan Poe of No. 23 Lincoln St., Greenhills, owns 1,750 shares, or an 8.75 percent stake of the Mandaluyong Gourmet Foods Inc., a restaurant and catering company.

In the last financial statements it filed with the SEC, Mandaluyong Gourmet reported sales of P6 million and a net loss of P623,981 in 2001.

The company's telephone number as listed in the records was "not yet in service" when dialed, however.

Its address was listed at the fourth floor of Building B SM Megamall. The officers of the company included chair Ernest Escaler, treasurer Reynaldo Salinas and corporate secretary Erlinda Contreras.

The SEC's records also showed a Susan Roces listed as an incorporator of a certain La Dolce Vita Co. *With a report from Elena Torrijos*

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

3 survivors pulled out of quake rubble

BAM, Iran—The trickle of survivors pulled alive from the rubble of the Bam earthquake dried up on Friday, one week after the pre-dawn tremor struck.

Rescuers found a man, a child and a pregnant woman in the remains of the ancient Iranian Silk Road City on Thursday. At least six others had been found since Tuesday despite what experts say are long odds of survival beyond 72 hours without food or water in such conditions.

Such "miracles," as rescue workers have dubbed them, have been fewer in this earthquake than many others in the past due to the mud-brick construction materials used in Bam which crumbled to dust, leaving few air pockets for survivors.

The quake, which measured 6.8 on the Richter scale, struck directly beneath Bam while most of its 100,000 people slept.

At least 30,000 people died and government officials have said the final toll may reach 50,000, making it one of the world's worst disasters of recent decades.

Seven survivors succumbed to their injuries after being evacuated to the central Iranian city of Isfahan and several others in the city were in critical condition, the official Irna news agency reported.

But with international aid pouring in to the affected area in southeast Iran, relief workers said health fears had abated.

"The risks one might have had are no longer... There's been no outbreak of contagious disease," Frederick Lyons, the United Nations' resident coordinator in Iran, said in Bam.

Lyons said that with the search and rescue phase now over, the UN would launch a flash appeal for funds next week to address survivors' primary needs for shelter, food and water.

"The world will always remember Bam," Iran's influential former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on Thursday told a mourning service in Bam, 1,000 km southeast of the capital Tehran. "It caused the world to cry," he said.

Stunned survivors huddled against the cold in tents or on streets and searched the ruins for friends and families as aftershocks kept people on edge.

Aid from some 50 countries has flooded in to help the stricken area, prompting an apparent thaw in relations between Iran and the United States after years of hostilities. *Reuters*

DECEMBER 29, 2003 satellite image of a neighborhood in Bam, Iran, after the earthquake. REUTERS

Bush: Sending aid to Iran does not mean US seeks warmer ties

CRAWFORD, Texas—US President George W. Bush said Thursday that sending aid to Iran after last week's devastating earthquake was a sign of compassion, not a message that he wants warmer ties with Tehran.

"What we're doing in Iran is we're showing the Iranian people (that) the American people care, that they've got great compassion for human suffering," he said after hunting quail in Falfurrias, Texas, with his father, former president George Bush.

Bush said he had temporarily eased restrictions on sending money and sensitive equipment to Iran "to be able to get humanitarian aid into the country," not send a signal to Tehran.

Some Iranian officials have said that US humanitarian aid following the temblor in Bam, which may have left as many as 40,000 people dead, are the latest in a series of positive signals from Washington.

"We appreciate the fact the Iranian government is willing to allow our humanitarian aid flights into their country. And it's a good thing to do, it's right to take care of people when they hurt and we're doing that," said Bush.

But he made clear that, if the Islamic republic wants better relations, it must turn over any followers of Osama bin Laden it has in custody, abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons, and embrace democratic political reform.

"The Iranian government must listen to the voice of those who long for freedom," said the US president, who later returned to his ranch near this tiny Texas town, where he ushered in the new year.

Bush said Tehran must hand over al-Qaida members "to their country of origin" and follow up on its pledge to cooperate with the UN nuclear watchdog agency.

Iran is building its first nuclear reactor, but has repeatedly denied US charges that it has embarked on a covert nuclear arms program.

Bush decided to temporarily ease aid restrictions after hearing from top foreign policy advisers last weekend that the bans were hampering humanitarian efforts in and around Bam, an aide said on condition of anonymity.

In his 2002 "State of the Union" speech, the US president declared Iran part of an "axis of evil" with North Korea and Iraq. Hardliners in Tehran, meanwhile, refer to the United States as "the Great Satan." *AFP*

Cold snap kills 179 in India, 20 in Bangladesh

NEW DELHI—A three-week-long cold snap in northern India has killed 22 people taking the death toll to 179, the Press Trust of India reported Thursday.

At least 22 died overnight as temperatures of three degrees Celsius swept the northern Indian plains of Uttar Pradesh state on Wednesday night, the news agency said.

"There will be no letup in the conditions on Friday. Fog and mist are likely to increase," officials warned, noting that day temperatures were 10 degrees Celsius below normal in most parts of Uttar Pradesh where Wednesday's deaths took the toll to 117.

At least 20 people have been crushed to death on northern Indian highways where the fog has caused scores of accidents.

The cold wave in the past two weeks has also claimed 36 lives in adjoining Bihar province, according to police and press reports.

Six more mostly elderly and homeless people died in central India's Madhya Pradesh, prompting the provincial government to take emergency measures to provide shelter to the homeless and medicine for people suffering from cold-related ailments.

The winter takes a heavy toll each year in South Asia, where homes are more suited to handle the equally deadly summers when temperatures shoot up to 49 degrees Celsius.

Last winter's cold spell killed almost 1,400 people.

In Dhaka, cold weather and thick fog have been responsible for at least 20 deaths and disrupted travel across Bangladesh over the last three days, newspapers said on Friday.

The newspapers said most of the victims were from the old and poor in the country's northern and western districts, where the lowest temperature recorded on Thursday was nine degree Celsius.

Weather officials on Friday said that temperatures might dip even further over the next few days.

Over 200 people have been admitted to hospitals with cold-related diseases, health officials said.

The cold weather also hit the capital Dhaka and the southern port city of Chittagong.

Some 200 people died from exposure to cold weather this time last year—also mostly in the north.

Transport officials said thick fog disrupted flights and the movement of ships and ferries.

"We diverted a number of incoming flights to Calcutta and Bangkok today and yesterday," a civil aviation official in Dhaka said on Friday.

In Dhaka, people sat by roadside braziers and sipped hot tea to warm themselves.

The government and opposition political parties have distributed thousands of blankets and warm clothes to the poor across the country, witnesses said.

Voluntary groups also came to their aid.

Weather officials said the cold spell swept into Bangladesh from the Himalayas and combined with moisture from the Bay of Bengal, enveloping much of the country in fog.

"Such combinations makes the weather chillier," said senior meteorologist Samarendra Karmakar. *AFP, Reuters*

A MAN pushes his bicycle along a street during a foggy morning in New Delhi on Jan. 2. Northern and central parts of India are experiencing a cold spell with dense fog, leading to the cancelation or long delays of flights and trains, as temperatures fall below normal seasonal levels. AFP

ISLAMIC religious students attending a class at a seminary in the port city of Karachi. REUTERS

Pakistan-India flight resumes after 2 years

NEW DELHI—The first commercial flight between India and Pakistan in two years arrived in the Indian capital Thursday, amid rising hopes of peace between the South Asian nuclear rivals.

"Fantastic! It's the beginning of a great year," said Capt. T. Muzaffar, who piloted the Pakistan International Airlines plane from the eastern Pakistani city of Lahore.

The flight is the result of improved relations between the two South Asian giants, who have scaled back tensions in recent months and raised hopes they will put decades of hatred and mistrust behind them.

"This will increase people-to-people contact. It will also lead us to resuming our dialogue," said Syed Munawar Bhatti, deputy head at the Pakistani Embassy in New Delhi.

At the airport, officials from India's state-run Bharat Petroleum Corp. handed red roses to welcome the 42 travelers.

"We are very, very happy. We hope the communication channels are not shut again," said passenger Jahangir Sharif, a Pakistani woman in her 50s.

The PIA flight later returned to Lahore with 114 passengers, including Indian and Pakistani businessmen, Indian filmmakers and journalists, said Yasmin Haroon, an airline spokesperson.

Since April, the two countries have also restored bus services, resumed full diplomatic ties and observed a ceasefire between forces lined up on either side of the Himalayan region of Kashmir.

The area is split between the two countries, but both claim it in its entirety. More than 65,000 people, mostly civilians, have died in the conflict since 1989.

PIA chair Ahmed Saeed, who saw off the flight, said new routes would begin shortly.

"The resumption of this service will definitely benefit both countries," he said, adding that service to the Indian cities of Madras and Hyderabad were on the table for future talks.

From the Indian side, Indian Airlines has decided to fly from New Delhi to Lahore and from the Indian financial hub of Bombay to the Pakistani port city of Karachi.

Although Indian commercial flights are to start Jan. 9, a special Indian Airlines plane was to fly delegates and journalists on Friday for this week's summit of South Asian nations in Islamabad. *AP*

Brazil fingerprints, US arrivals tit-for-tat

SAO PAULO—Brazilian police photographed and fingerprinted all arriving Americans on Thursday—tit-for-tat for a similar US program that begins next week.

In all, 230 American citizens were thus identified Thursday at Brazil's largest international airport here under what a federal police spokesperson called a "judicial decision."

That decision was handed down earlier in the week by Judge Julier Sebastiao da Silva of the federal bench in the central Brazilian city of Mato Grosso based on "the principle of reciprocity," although it could still be annulled by the federal government.

The identification measures were not immediately put into effect at the airport in Rio de Janeiro, where federal police said they had not yet received official instructions, according to the Brazilian press agency, Agencia Brasil.

Beginning Jan. 5, immigration officials at all US international airports will vet visitors' passports and visas and pose the usual questions—before taking their fingerprints and photographs.

That is phase one of US-Visit, a $380-million effort to track down terrorists. Visitors from 27 countries whose citizens do not need visas to enter the United States—mostly in Europe, are exempted.

By 2005, every port-of-entry on land, sea and air will have the fingerprint and photographic technology. All US visas and passports will eventually include photos and fingerprints—called "biometric identifiers."

The program takes effect after the United States raised its terror alert to its next-to-highest level in December. Intelligence indicated that al-Qaida was planning to hijack airliners for a repeat of its Sept. 11 attacks in which 3,000 died. *AFP*

NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU
Room 201, Bonuan Apartelle
10 Happy Glen Loop, Baguio City
Tel No. (074)443-9255
Fax No. (074)443-8971
E-mail: inq_baguio@inquirer.com.ph

SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU
23 Aurora St., Old Albay District
Legazpi City
Tel. No. (052) 820-8402
Fax No. (052) 820-1274
E-mail: inq_bicol@inquirer.com.ph

Across the NATION

E-mail: pr_provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph

Assistant Editor **Tony Bergonia**

VISAYAS BUREAU
c/o Cebu Daily News
18-15 Escario St., Cebu City
Tel. Nos. (032) 233-0346/233-0349
Fax No. (032) 232-9938
E-mail: pdivis@skyinet.net

MINDANAO BUREAU
FEP Printing Corp. Bldg.
Ma-a Road, Davao City
Tel. No. (082)244-1770 to 71
Fax No. (082)244-1771
E-mail: pdiminda@dv.weblinq.com

Aklan Lakas candidates take drug tests before launching poll campaign

By Recto I. Vidal
PDI Visayas Bureau

KALIBO, Aklan—Candidates of the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats in this province took drug tests yesterday after they filed their certificates of candidacy before the provincial office of the Commission on Elections.

Insp. Hilarion Roga, a chemist from the Philippine National Police Crime Laboratory based in Camp Delgado, Iloilo City, said incumbent Rep. Gabrielle Calizo of the lone district of Aklan and candidate for governor Efren Fernandez, a retired police general and former executive director of the Dangerous Drugs Board, submitted their urine samples to him for drug testing.

He said drug testing of the local candidates, led by Calizo and Fernandez of the local party Kusog It Akean, was the first in Western Visayas, in compliance with a Comelec resolution calling for mandatory drug tests of national and local candidates.

He said the results will be known by Monday. A drug test costs P300 per person.

Fernandez said in the absence of implementing guidelines from the Comelec, the local candidates of Kusog submitted themselves to drug tests to "establish their moral ascendancy."

"It is also a way of expressing our staunch commitment of setting an example on how to get rid of the drug menace. We hope that other local candidates for that matter will follow suit," said Calizo whose local party Kusog got the official nomination from the ruling party as the official party of the Lakas-CMD in Aklan.

Yesterday's filing was attended with much fanfare, starting with a motorcade from the Kalibo Plaza as the candidates marched to the Comelec office.

Colorful campaign banners, sporting the smiling faces of the candidates, were unfurled and were displayed prominently during the motorcade, attracting curious onlookers from the roadside.

The candidates, after the drug tests, went to the office of Bishop Adolfo Depra, vicar general of the Kalibo diocese.

The bishop said he wished for clean, peaceful and honest elections.

Death toll in deadly Lucena fire rises to 20

LUCENA CITY—The death toll in Wednesday's noon fire near the city public market rose to 20 after Army soldiers dug a 10-year-old child earlier reported as missing and a still unidentified body of a man.

The police investigating team identified the recovered child as Estela Alcantara. Her charred remains were identified by her relatives.

Conflicting reports surrounded the identity of the recovered male body. According to police, the charred body that was found by the soldiers from the Armed Forces Civil Relations Group based from Camp Nakar was identified as Hadji Naim Sarifada.

But the name was already listed in the first casualty report released by the local fire station office on Thursday. The first Sarifada had already been flown to Marawi for burial Wednesday evening.

More missing persons were reported to the police station since Wednesday. Based on the last count, at least 10 persons were reported missing after the fire that gutted nine commercial buildings along Juares and Merchan streets.

The manager of Footluckers shoe store reported all his salesladies accounted for. However, diggers still believe that other persons were trapped inside the store.

Residents said the market administrator and the Task Force Sidewalk created by City Hall to go after sidewalk vendors could be held responsible.

Before the fire, the streets and sidewalks at the perimeter of the public market were crowded with vendors peddling assorted firecrackers.

Investigators said the three-hour fire was set off by a firecracker buyer testing a product. The missile-like firecracker hit a power line, then zigzagged to ignite a row of pyrotechnics displayed on sidewalk stalls along Juarez Street.

The Lucena City engineering office started to demolish the concrete ruins of the destroyed buildings on Thursday to protect volunteer rescuers still searching for bodies in the area. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

2 lass supporting Masbate kin among dead in fire

By Delfin Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LUCENA CITY—Fire victims Cecille Rogel and Myrna Capillas had been the best of friends since they left their village in Burias town in Masbate in May with a group of other friends. Their sole purpose: To find a decent job that would enable them to help their families back home.

But seven months later, what would come home are not triumphant daughters but charred bodies. The two died with 18 others in a noon fire on New Year's Eve.

"We left Masbate with full of hopes that in a short time we could be of help to our poor parents back home. That included Cecille and Myrna. They were friends," Geraldine Avenido, Cecille's cousin, told the INQUIRER as they held vigil in Funeraria Pagbilao.

Avenido said the parents of the two victims were not yet aware of the tragic fate of the "best of friends."

"We don't know how to reach them," Avenido said.

The two victims carried their special friendship until the end.

Their bodies were recovered in a tight embrace in one of the rooms of Chinggay's Store, where they worked as helpers.

Avenido said she spent the last Christmas in Manila with Capillas as her company.

Police tag 18 S. Cotabato villages as election 'hot spots'

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Police have stepped up security operations in 18 villages in South Cotabato identified as potential election hot spots.

Senior Supt. Romeo Rufino, police chief for South Cotabato, earlier declared 18 villages in at least four towns in the province as potential areas of concern in the coming May elections.

These towns include Banga, T'boli, Surallah and Tampakan.

"We are now intensifying security operations in these areas because in previous elections these were the places where election-related violence took place," Rufino said.

These areas were known to be the hotbeds of communist guerrillas and other armed groups.

In the 2001 local elections, three supporters of Salvador Ramos, then a candidate for mayor of T'boli, were killed when they were ambushed by armed men while campaigning in a far-flung village.

In the same year in Tampakan, the son of incumbent mayor Claudius Barroso was killed when unidentified armed group ambushed them after campaigning in a hinterland village.

In Surallah, two aspirants for a seat at the Sangguniang Bayan were also wounded in election-related hostilities.

Aside from their histories of violence during election period, the towns were also noted as strongholds of communist guerrillas.

Rufino said they expect the New People's Army in these areas to require candidates to secure permits to campaign from the rebel movement.

The police official asked the politicians not to pay the rebels.

He said police were ready to provide security escorts to candidates who would need assistance when campaigning in identified rebel areas. *Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Cops bracing for violence in poll case

CABANATUAN CITY—Police officials in Nueva Ecija have ordered the reinforcement of the police force in San Isidro town as the canvassing of contested election returns for a 2001 mayoral candidate there starts today.

Supt. Luisito Palmera, Nueva Ecija police director, said policemen from Cabiao, Jaen and San Antonio towns were sent to San Isidro as supporters of incumbent Mayor Sonia Lorenzo and 2001 mayoral candidate Nestor Magno converge at the town hall.

The Supreme Court, in an en banc resolution Dec. 11, allowed the canvassing of returns for Magno, former San Isidro mayor, who was disqualified by the Commission on Elections when votes were already being canvassed in 2001.

The disqualification was a result of a petition by a resident who claimed Magno had not completed the probation period of five years for a bribery conviction when he ran in 2001. Magno was convicted of soliciting money from a jueteng operator while San Isidro mayor in 1995. He remained in his post until 1998 and served under probation.

The petition cited provisions of the Omnibus Election Code that showed Magno qualified only for the 2004 elections.

The high court, however, ruled that the Omnibus Election Code must yield to the Local Government Code, which has a different provision on candidates' qualifications. Magno petitioned the Comelec citing the Supreme Court ruling. The Comelec ordered the creation of a new board to canvass Magno's votes.

Lorenzo filed a petition before the Supreme Court to block the Comelec order, but the court ruled on Dec. 11 that the order was legal. *Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Rains block Maguindanao kidnap victim's rescue

COTABATO CITY—Heavy downpour has hampered the operations to rescue a Filipino-Chinese trader kidnapped in Maguindanao.

Mayor Muslimin Sema said a group of police, military and MNLF integrees have scoured all the marshy areas of Talitay and Talayan towns where the kidnappers have allegedly brought the 24-year-old victim Norman Sia.

Sia was kidnapped on Dec. 8.

Sema said Sia had been handed over to Mayangkang Saguile, a Pentagon gang leader operating in Maguindanao.

"We started our search from 4 p.m. until 9 p.m. There was no encounter. The heavy downpour prevented us," Sema said.

Sema said the kidnappers have demanded a P10-million ransom.

"We are asking the kidnappers to release their victim because the family could not afford to give in to their demand," Sema said.

The mayor said the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has also helped in the operations.

"The operation made by the MILF is separate. Members of the front's coordinating committee on cessation of hostilities informed us about their efforts," Sema added.

The team that launched a region-wide hunt for Sia and his captors recently clashed with a group of MILF forces in Datu Piang town in Maguindanao. The clash left five soldiers and 15 rebels killed.

The Pentagon was tagged responsible for at least 50 kidnappings in Mindanao. *Rosa-May de Guzman, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

A SUCCESSFUL anti-kidnapping operation brings together President Macapagal-Arroyo and anti-kidnap czar Angelo Reyes in Malacañang during the presentation of a 2-year-old boy seized in Muntinlupa City and rescued in Laguna.

JERRY CARUAL/MALACAÑANG PHOTO

Teener latest vigilante victim

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Suspected members of an anti-drug vigilante group attacked on New Year's Day and killed a teenager in Fatima Village here.

The victim was a 19-year-old mass communications student identified as a certain Amir Tubec. Two motorcycle-riding gunmen shot him in his house in Zone 2 Block 9, Fatima on Thursday morning.

Policemen who rushed to the crime scene after the attack recovered several shells of .45 cal. bullets. Authorities said they have not established the motive for the killing.

The family of the victim told the police the victim has not received any death threat prior to the attack.

Since 2001, motorcycle-riding men believed to be members of an anti-drug vigilante group have killed 145 victims.

None of these series of summary killings has been solved by police. *Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Fire displaces families on New Year in Puerto Princesa

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—A fire of still undetermined origin burned 20 houses and business establishments early New Year's Day, displacing more than 30 families along Burgos Street in Barangay Tagumpay here.

The fire, which was stopped at about sunrise, razed 12 houses and eight business establishments, mostly made of light materials.

Most of the victims, who were deep in sleep, were caught by surprise and were able to save only themselves.

Investigators said the fire started at the house of Cesar Mondragon but they have yet to determine the cause.

Firefighters had a hard time controlling the fire because of the inaccessibility of the area, which is adjacent to the city public market.

In a radio interview, Barangay Tagumpay chair Ireneo Bonilla said a proposed road was supposed to have been constructed in the area but two families opposed the construction because the road would cut through their houses.

Had the road been built, Bonilla said, the fire would have not reached that far.

The families were given temporary shelter at the barangay hall. *Geraldford Ticke, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Satur says Left expects more black prop from military

BAGUIO CITY—Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo said his party and other Left-leaning groups are expecting more negative reports and black propaganda from the government and military following the INQUIRER's special report on purges within the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Ocampo said the military's effort to link the party to the activities of the New People's Army, the armed wing of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and the CPP, was aimed at disqualifying Bayan Muna as a party-list group.

"As far as I am concerned, the issue on purges is already settled. But it might be (used) against Bayan Muna," Ocampo told the INQUIRER on Monday.

He said the issue was settled after the CPP-NPA campaigned for "rectification" within the communist movement in the early 1990s. He said this move was aimed at stopping the purges, which he said was rooted from paranoia created by infiltration from the military.

Bayan Muna received the highest votes among party-list groups in the 2001 elections. The votes gave the party the maximum three seats in the House of Representatives.

Ocampo said Bayan Muna chapters in the country are working to maintain the party's status as the top party-list group in the May 10 elections.

But he said linking Bayan Muna to the activities of communist rebels would lead to either of two actions. First, he said, groups opposing Bayan Muna would question its legitimacy and qualification. The other scenario, he said, is that other parties may attempt to discredit Bayan Muna should it win seats in the elections.

"We oppose any move to question our qualification and legitimacy as a political group. We also challenge any attempt to link us with the (communist) movement," Ocampo said.

He said they are worried that the military might exploit the issue. *Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

INQUIRER Visayas
E-mail: pdivis@skynet.net
Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Edralyn L. Benedicto

The unlearned lessons of tragedies

By Vicente S. Labro
Tacloban City

JUST when people in Eastern Visayas were about to commemorate the 16th anniversary of one of the world's worst sea disasters that claimed the lives of some 3,000 individuals, tragedy struck anew in Southern Leyte.

BOATMEN won't give up hope in the search for bodies of victims of the Doña Paz tragedy in this 1987 file photo. PDI FILE PHOTO

The sea disaster occurred on Dec. 20, 1987, when M/V Doña Paz collided with oil tanker M/V Vector in the high seas. The passenger ship set sail from this city and made a brief stopover in Catbalogan, Samar before proceeding to Manila. But before it reached its destination, the ship collided with the tanker, caught fire and sank.

In the recent tragedy, which occurred on Dec. 19, more than 150 people were killed when mud cascaded down the mountains and crashed on the homes of sleeping people. These mudslide incidents occurred in Barangays Punta, Catbaunan and Malico, San Francisco town; Barangay Pinut-an, San Ricardo town; and the poblacion of Liloan town. All these towns are located on Panaon Island in Southern Leyte.

Many likened the incident at the Panaon Island to yet another catastrophe that hit the region—the killer flashflood that hit Ormoc City on Nov. 5, 1991 and killed more than 5,000 of the city's residents.

As in the Ormoc tragedy, illegal logging was also blamed for the mudslides in Southern Leyte. In both instances, continuous rains and occasional heavy downpour preceded the rush of water (in Ormoc) and of mud (in Southern Leyte) from the almost treeless mountains to the lowlands. And in both instances, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) immediately announced that the mountains had been denuded long before the occurrence of the calamities.

'Fractured soil'

DENR officials, however, blamed excessive rainfall, land conversion and the basic geology for the tragic incident in Southern Leyte. They claimed that the area has long been deforested when the landslide and mudslide incident happened.

Forestlands on Panaon Island had been converted into agricultural lands long before the conversion of forested areas with a slope of at least 18 percent was prohibited by law. The reclassified lands are now mostly planted with coconut trees, which cannot hold earth unlike forest trees.

DENR officials also pointed out that Panaon Island has a "fractured" soil that allows rainwater to seep in and "lubricate" the underlying rocks. When the area becomes over-saturated, the soil or mud will then slide down.

With the island's geological make-up, some observers noted that mining in the area would be a very risky business. But it was learned that the DENR still allows mining exploration on Panaon Island.

'Place of gold'

Panaon Island is known as a place with gold.

Probably it was from this island where the rajahs in nearby Limasawa Island and other places got the gold for their trinkets.

In the 1980s, the Benguet Exploration searched for gold and other minerals on the island. But after a few years the mining firm closed shop, leaving behind a 180-meter long tunnel in Barangay Pinut-an, San Ricardo, Southern Leyte.

An official of the DENR's Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), however, said that the abandoned tunnel is located some 100 meters away from the site where mudslides occurred in the village last Dec. 20.

At present, another mining company is scouring the landslide-prone island, looking for valuable minerals.

Buena Suerte Mining Corporation was given by MGB a permit to explore 6,612 hectares in all four towns of Panaon Island.

The mining firm, it was learned, is now in the process of exploring for gold, silver and other minerals in Liloan, Pintuyan, San Francisco and San Ricardo towns.

'Wake-up call'

In the aftermath of the Southern Leyte tragedy, Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun was quoted by national dailies as saying that the disaster should serve as a wake-up call for local governments nationwide to plant "deep-rooted trees in sloped areas," devise early warning systems for residents of landslide-prone areas, and have relocation sites ready for such emergencies.

This was reminiscent of the Ormoc tragedy in 1991, when a call for tree planting and other environmental protection efforts nationwide was aired by the same agency. But still the unscrupulous cutting of trees went on—and is still going on.

Everyone knows that environmental degradation would lead us nowhere but to a catastrophe, yet despite the floods and landslides this still goes on every day.

In Eastern Visayas we have the Ormoc flashflood, the inundation of Samar and very recently, the Southern Leyte tragedy.

Similarly, overloaded boats and ships still travel the seas even after the sinking of the overloaded Doña Paz and some smaller vessels.

When will we really ever learn?

Sugar crisis again

LUCID INTERVAL

Rowena V. Guanzon

NEGROS is slow at this time of the year and it is not only because of the holidays. It is because once again we have a crisis.

Even after some initiatives by sugar farmers and government leaders to diversify our crops, Negros Occidental remains a monocrop economy. Corn and piggery come a far second, and although our provincial leaders are trying something, they have not produced dramatic results.

Our people depend mainly on sugar, and that means money for our food, shelter, education, health care and capital. When sugar prices are low, you can be sure that even the banana cue vendor by the roadside in Cadiz or Kabankalan will feel the pinch.

Last year was a bumper crop, with prices at P840 per 50 kilo-bag of raw sugar in the domestic market. This year, the price dropped by more than P100, which is deadly. This year's price is between P707 to P730.

Victorias Milling Company (VMC) mills 25 percent of the cane in the province. When VMC sneezes, Negros Occidental catches more than a cold so its figures can give us a picture of the situation. For last crop year, which ended in August, VMC's Chief Operating Officer Arthur Aguilar said they milled 2.8 million tons of cane, which means 5.5 million in 50 kilo-bags of sugar or a gross revenue of about P2.5 billion. Current revenues are down.

Losses

For every P10 drop in price, VMC loses P20 million while sugar planters lose about P45 million. With the 100-peso drop in prices, that is half a billion pesos in unrealized revenue for VMC compared to last year, and for the 3,000 to 4,000 sugar planters who mill with VMC that means losses of P450 million. The estimated 12,000 other planters mill with 9 other sugar mills in the province.

According to Art Aguilar (who is also in the board of Newsbreak), the drop in sugar prices is due to a confluence of many factors, and these are high production, the drop in world market price, and weak domestic demand. There is also smuggling which has existed since time immemorial, and which the Bureau of Customs and law enforcers have not stopped for obvious reasons.

Another major problem of the sugar industry is a loophole in the Customs and Tariff Code, which taxes food ingredient preparations with sugar content in powdered or liquid form such as coloring. Customs tax these items only 3 percent of landed cost even if it is a way to circumvent importation of refined sugar, which has a higher tariff of 60 percent of landed cost.

For example, industrial consumers of sugar that produce fruit juices import powdered ingredient preparations with high sugar content from Thailand. This way they do not have to buy domestic sugar because the world market price is much lower than the domestic price at 6 cents per pound or less than P500 per bag, and that is cheaper than buying sugar in our country.

World market

We can't solve the problem by dumping our sugar in the world market because of the low price. The Sugar Regulatory Administration, headed by James Ledesma and Paeng Golez, tried to reduce this year's bumper crop by requiring all mills and planters to sell 4 percent of their production to the world market. Three weeks ago they sold in the world market at around P500 per bag.

But the government cannot simply throw the blame on the world market because it can do something about the smuggling, taxes and diversification program for sugar farmers. Smuggling of sugar has serious costs to the industry, aside from the loopholes in the Customs and Tariff Code. Since 1986 when we had Bitay Lacson as governor who had President Cory Aquino's ear, and until now, no president has created solutions to the problems of the sugar industry.

Nail in the coffin

As an additional nail in the coffin, the Bureau of Internal Revenue is planning to tax the sugar industry by requiring Value Added Tax on raw sugar and 1 percent withholding tax for planters and millers. This will affect not only Negros but also other sugar producing provinces such as Bukidnon, Tarlac and Batangas.

Gone are the years when Negros exported 75 percent of all the sugar from the country, when the "sugar bloc" was a major ally of any administration because of its clout and we had a Negrense in the Senate. Nowadays there is every reason for us to be ashamed of being called "leisure class" by people outside of Negros not only because of its decadent connotation, but also because we have no reason to claim we have "class." Neither do we have the luxury of leisure with the problems we are facing.

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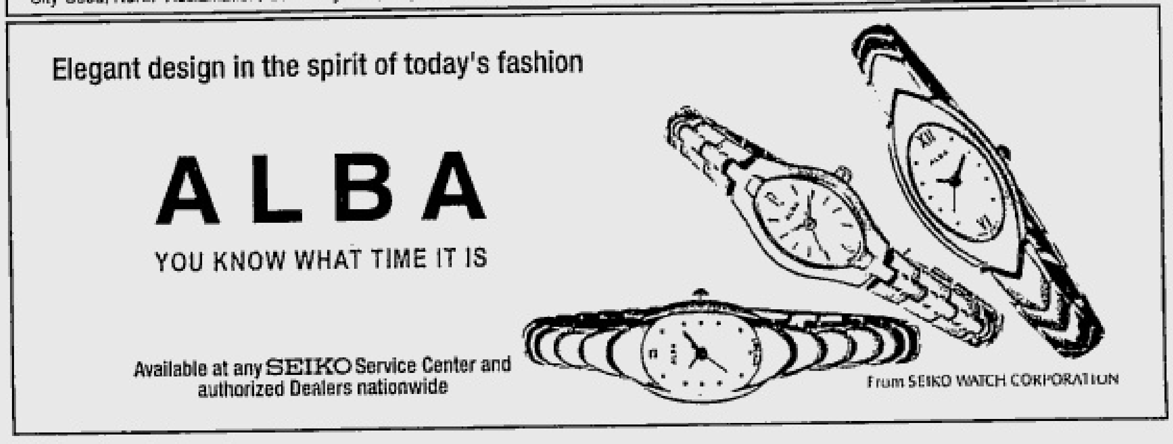

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OPINION

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Editor in Chief **Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc**
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Wrong priorities

EDITORIAL

IN THE AFTERGLOW of two of the year's biggest celebrations, we can understand perhaps the lingering credo that God's in His heaven and all is right with the world. But the mists will dissipate soon enough as we turn the corner to run smack into rude reality—the reality of the continuing misery of the landslide victims in Leyte, the number of the dead still being dug out from the rubble of the earthquake in Iran (now expected to reach 50,000) and the tell-tale signs of a periodic dementia that comes with the election fever.

Other hard realities have a way of taking the shine from the eternal message of hope and good will that the Christmas season has always brought. Not the least of these is the reality of the distance that still has to be traveled before we become a nation that truly takes care of its own and makes real to more the promise of a fuller life now and not in some hazy, elusive future. And with this is the accompanying reality that a Sisyphean futility seems to have eternally dogged all efforts spent to break out of the constraints ascribed to the basket case of Asia. Self-imposed and self-generated constraints that can no longer startle with their novelty or number, but which still can leave us sputtering in helpless rage.

To the many ills of our society that have been identified and analyzed to death over the decades, we pick one that must be a linchpin in our collective DNA: a mystifying ability to set the wrong priorities.

In the drive to modernize our travel infrastructure, the MRT and the extension and enhancement of the North Luzon Expressway have made the first hour of any journey northwards quite pleasant and comfortable. The hours after that are a lesson in the importance of prayer and faith in guardian angels as the wide expressway narrows down to a two-lane blacktop highway on which big cargo trucks and bigger Greyhound-size buses bear down on smaller cars and somehow avoid houses, trees and people by the roadside. The MRT is a happy alternative to the chaos below. But the unavoidable thumps as car tires hit the connecting sections of the road (that the builders of the flyovers could have remedied and maintained) make one wonder if some aspects in how to care for newfangled conveniences have not been missed or set aside.

In the city of Manila, local authorities and others are on a binge to spruce up the city, including banning vehicles from passing through a large portion of Avenida Rizal and converting it into some sort of pedestrian mall. Fine, except that many more sectors of the city (not far from Avenida Rizal) are in advanced stages of urban rot and too many people still survive conditions that are subhuman. Where lies the logic in these priorities? Shouldn't some things be given more time and the resources of the city? In Intramuros, the sprucing up now includes a P170-million light and sound facility depicting selective slices of Philippine history that now await the acerbic judgment of experts. Consider that the National Museum, a short detour away, provides a fuller and richer presentation of the origins of the nation. But its important work is hampered by a lack of the wherewithal to be a more effective communicator of Philippine history and culture. But drama and a light and shadow show are more palatable. So there.

Beautification and other light and easier endeavors seem to have taken root in all but the remotest barangays and towns. But real efforts for real community services in livelihood and jobs do not merit the fanfare or public announcements as the distinction of being the cleanest and greenest town of the year.

Would that 2004 will teach us the grievous distortion of wrong priorities and the urgency of correcting them.

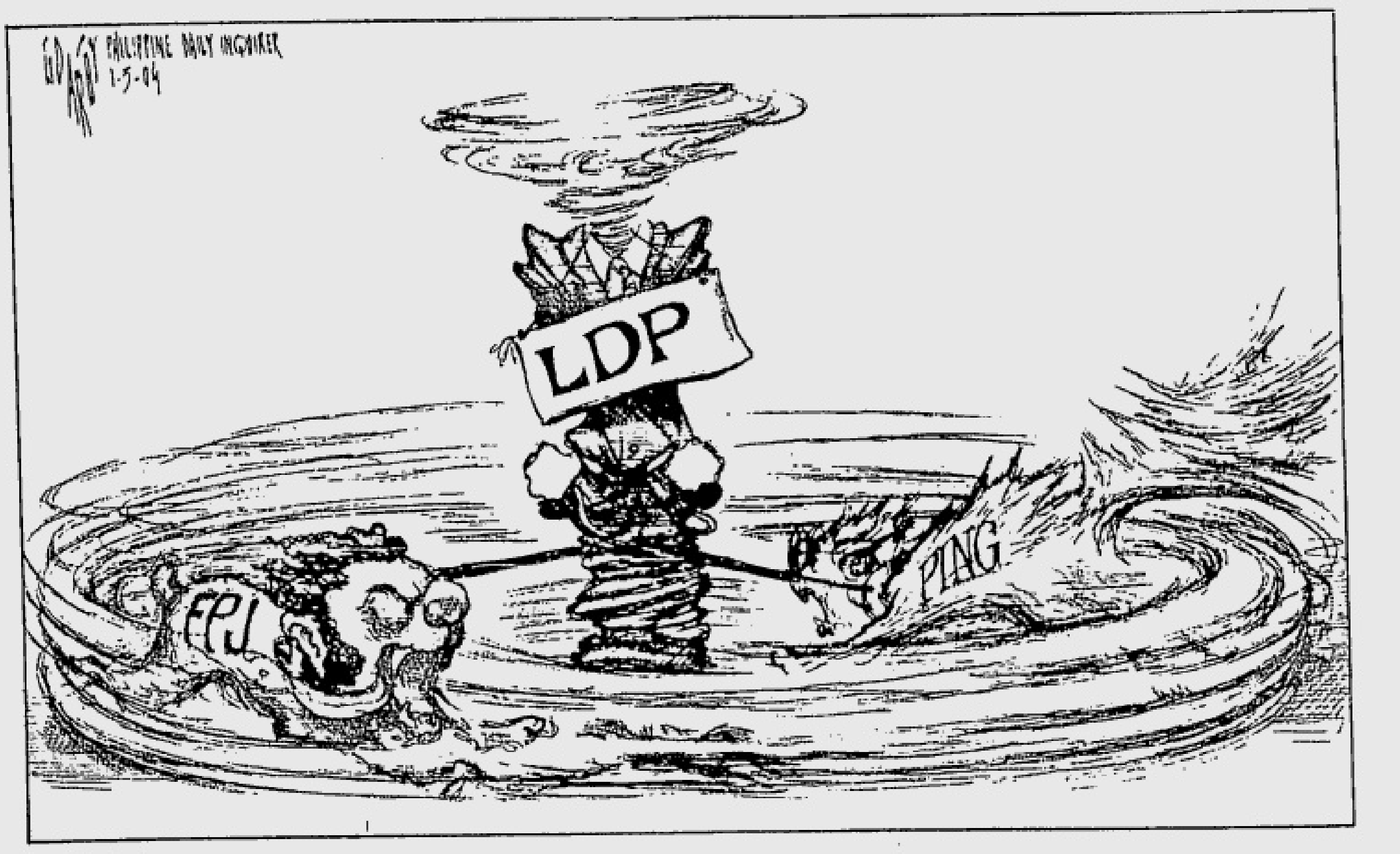
No middle way

FOREIGN COMMENT

FOLLOWING Sept. 11, 2001, George W. Bush warned that the war on terrorists and their sponsors would be long and of global reach. Persistent pursuit of such a goal was always going to be hard to maintain, whether because of the softer options offered the electorate by the political opposition or through bureaucratic inertia. Sensing this, two neo-conservatives, David Frum and Richard Perle, have issued a renewed wake-up call in a book to be published soon.

"We can feel the will to win ebbing in Washington," they write in An End to Evil. "We sense the reversion to the bad old habits of complacency and denial." They remind their readers that the likes of Osama bin Laden require another spectacular act of mass murder to justify their propaganda, and conclude that there is no middle way between victory and holocaust.

The Daily Telegraph (London)



Review and preview

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

THIS being my first column for 2004, I will begin by wishing all my friends and readers the best of everything every day of this New Year. May God's blessings touch our lives with good health and happiness and our country's future with peace and prosperity.

The year just past has been less than comfortable, with the national economy in a shambles, peace and order at high risk, graft and corruption on the rise, faith in the government diminishing and abuses of public servants proliferating.

Last year saw the decline of the peso to unprecedented depths even as the number of kidnappings, bank robberies, rapes and murders increased alarmingly. Subversion continued without let-up. Scandals broke out in the bureaus of public highways, internal revenue, customs, and also in the armed forces and the police.

Congress passed the stupid Overseas Absentee Voting Act, President Macapagal-Arroyo signed it into law, and the Supreme Court got into the act by sustaining it. In another dubious but this time well-received decision, the Court aborted the impeachment of Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide Jr., the most respectable official in the whole government.

President Macapagal was indirectly charged in the Jose Pidal case by Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who has so far blocked Senate Report No. 237 recommending his indictment for several crimes. The Kuratong Baleleng case, where he is one of the accused, was dismissed by an RTC judge over strong protests from the prosecution.

Last July, several junior officers of the Armed Forces staged an abortive coup later found to have been politically motivated. Charges have been filed against the rebels but not against their supposed principals by induction, including Sen. Gregorio Honasan. He went into hiding for fear of being arrested but remains free as a bird to date.

Most despicable was the kidnap-murder of a young woman for whom the culprits demanded ransom although she had already bled to death. Most of the killers are still at large while Angelo Reyes, the anti-kidnap czar, is practicing for the next concert of the Three Terrors.

Most brazen was the theft of several park benches at the Luneta that were hauled off in trucks for possible sale to whoever would be so stupid as to buy them. Another rascal sought to replicate that foolish caper by stealing electric posts. The two thieves may be enjoying each other's company in a detention cell or the mental hospital.

Although the campaign periods are supposed to begin only this year, the candidates started their bids for public office last year. GMA reneged on her promise not to run and decided on second thought to run. She has bombarded the voters with her TV and radio commercials, made official visits to many provinces and attended various religious and social functions to impress upon them that she is the mother of the nation. But many would rather be orphans.

Not to be outdone, her rivals also began their own drives. Raul Roco started first with his colorful shirts, and Gringo also declared his availability although there were no takers. Lacson followed suit and, after some initial coyness, Fernando Poe Jr. announced he was also in the race. A religious leader also got into the act, believing that his supposed 7 million followers will all vote for him.

The year just ended was full of vagaries, and so, we may expect, will the year just beginning. The idiosyncrasies of the Filipino people are mostly amusing but can sometime be tragically pernicious. Remember what happened when they elected Joseph Estrada in 1998, and consider what might happen in the presidential election this year. Another actor may encore in Malacañang.

The other candidates are likely to make the elections this year particularly ludicrous. Their character and credentials, or lack of them, will become more patent as the campaign becomes more obtrusive and expensive. We shall again be deluged with posters. Streamers of all sizes will be strung across public streets. The Commission on Elections will make strong reminders against illegal electioneering but that is all it will do.

During the next several months, all the country will hear about will be politics. Candidates will be trying to outbuy and outsell each other, their election expenses to be recouped in office if they win. The votes of the non-resident overseas voters will trickle in, to be counted by administration personnel in our embassies and consulates abroad, away from the prying eyes of the Comelec. The elections will be followed by protests and *quo warranto* petitions from losing candidates unwilling to accept defeat.

On June 30, a new set of officials will be inducted, some of them re-electionists, others beginning new terms, many as bench warmers only for political kingpins who have served the maximum allowable tenure. All of them will vow to serve their constituents faithfully and honestly. The rest of the year will be the same as in previous years, with the government awash as usual in graft, incompetence, extravagance and indifference.

Am I being too pessimistic? Let's wait and see.

Where is the hope for us?

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

IS there hope for the Filipino people? Aside from the "Where there is life, there is hope" kind of cheer-giving, spine-straightening motherhood statements, that is.

As the New Year begins and people give more thought to the options before them and the choices they must make, their answer to that question is certainly going to bear on any decision to "make or break" as it were—to leave the Philippines or to stick it out.

What evidence can we bring out to make the case for hope? There certainly seems to be a disheartening amount of evidence to the contrary. Events of the past six months alone are enough to discourage the fainthearted. Take the coup-attempt-turned-mutiny. Those who read the Davide Commission Report on the series of coup attempts in the late '80s point out that it happened because we failed to heed its recommendations—an example of history teaching and the Filipino never learning.

Another striking illustration is the opposition's choice of a movie actor as their presidential candidate. These are the same people who supported actor Joseph Estrada's failed presidency—the incidence of poverty increased during his perforce short term. They refuse to heed the lesson that for wise decision-making, a warm, popular heart, while necessary, is not sufficient—just as a cold, competent head, while not sufficient, is absolutely necessary. The lust for power has a blinding effect. The kicker, of course, is that FPJ may indeed be the people's choice—which is one of the biggest arguments of those who take the "hopeless case" side.

It must be understood that supporting a movie actor for the presidency is not what makes us, or the situation, seem hopeless. What does that is our supporting movie actors who not only have had, by choice, very little education, but also have a reputation for drunkenness and unfaithfulness.

Then there is the big blow to those who subscribe to the Rizalian statement (including myself) that "the youth is the hope of our country." This happened when young people in Congress—not all, but a lot—either initiated or lent their names to the move to impeach Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. They were supposed to be better than their fathers; they were supposed to be idealistic and untainted. Yet they acted in what looked like a most cynical, trad-pol manner. Whether they were witting or unwitting tools of their elders who had an axe to grind against the Chief Justice or whether they were on a quest for power and recognition is immaterial. What is material is that rather than giving us cause for hope, they were displaying their arrogance. What is material is that they saw fit to support the impeachment of Davide, while turning a blind eye to the efforts to impeach the likes of Luz Tancangco or Aniano Desierto.

And how, people ask, can there be hope when someone like Loren Legarda, who, while not so young, still epitomized what most thought would be the new breed of principled politicians (although that now sounds increasingly oxymoronic), does a volte-face and actively courts the vice-presidential slot with FPJ?

Or how can there be hope for the country when a torturer or a killer, or a drug lord, or a bribe asker/taker not only gets away with his crimes but aspires to and obtains high office? Or when government employees who are faced with life-style checks go on strike in protest—and succeed in stopping the checks? Or when the Comelec insists that a counting machine is "stand alone," even when it has a communications port and a modem? Or when the government can't seem to solve the garbage, the traffic, or the pollution and environmental problems (the Leyte calamity—again!)? Or when 33 out of 100 children who enter school don't even finish sixth grade?

And that's just a partial list.

Do we have evidence, hard or soft, that indicates there is hope? Let me count the ways.

For starters, let us never forget that it was we Filipinos who showed the world what people power really means. It is acknowledged that the Edsa People Power Revolt not only captured the attention of the world, but showed the way to freedom to oppressed people in both the First and Third Worlds.

How about Namfrel? That's a home-grown NGO, whose members have been consulted by different countries all over the world—in Asia, Latin America and Africa—about organizing watchdog organizations to ensure clean elections.

Or the many Filipinos who have received international recognition for their achievements not only in sports and entertainment, but for their work in education, in science, in engineering, in computer technology, in journalism, in environmental protection, and even in poverty reduction.

And for those who cannot think of Filipinos, discipline and good governance at the same time, one can point to Marikina, or Subic, or Cebu City, for that matter.

Ten years ago, no one could conceive of Filipinos waiting in line for buses and public transportation. Five years ago, no one would have thought that the smoke and noise pollution attendant to welcoming the New Year could be significantly abated. And yet these have come to pass.

So don't tell me there is no hope for Filipinos. Not only because 80 percent of Filipinos will not agree with you, not only because Filipinos remain hopeful in the teeth of disaster, but because we have shown that we can overcome the greatest odds. Happy New Year.

'No kidding, how did we?'

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

SAN FRANCISCO—This is only the second time that my family ever spent Christmas and New Year's Eve abroad. The first was in Bangkok in 1997, when my husband was still ambassador to Cambodia. And now this Christmas vacation in the United States. Our New Year's Eve over the past nearly 38 years together has invariably been spent with two clans in Manila. Last New Year's Eve, 14 hours behind the celebration in the Philippines, found us in a hotel all by ourselves in this beautiful city by the Bay.

There were fireworks coming from the direction of the city's Chinatown, but for the most part they were the rockets like those of the Fourth of July only; the San Franciscans made merry and indulged in revelry in Union Square in downtown San Francisco, by the Embarcadero area in the wharf, and in the clubs—warm hearts welcoming the new year in the last night of the old year that was very cold and wet in the Bay Area. But for the most part, I suspect the folks didn't want to get cold outside and enjoyed instead their own parties and family reunions inside homes. This included the many hundred thousands of Filipinos in the Bay area alone who spread out the Filipino goodies as though they were back in Pinas. But as we watched all the fireworks, we chuckled to ourselves, for it was so tame by Filipino standards. We definitely missed the ear-splitting bangs of the "*super-lolos*" and the chatter and political gossip of the clan.

* * *

At this time of the year, when we're starting a new one, many of us tend to be a bit introspective and we like to reflect on our values. Some of us look back on how things were when we were a bit younger. I found an excellent introspective piece passed on to me by Australian business executive Peter Wallace two months ago, which was also passed on to him by someone else. The piece's author is not identified but I thought now is the best time to reprint it.

The title of this piece is, "How did we survive?" to which the one who sent this piece around by e-mail retorted, "No kidding, how did we?" It was obviously written for an American audience, judging from references, but one can exchange it for certain local details and it still holds true for those in our generation of the '50s, '60s and '70s.

This piece reminiscing about a time, a period in contemporary history when childhood was warmer and more spontaneous and carefree, less cold and calculated; when life was more relaxed and easy, less neurotic; more dependent on friendships and relationships, less on gadgets. When kids behaved like true kids, and not half-adults. Oh, for those good old days! Enjoy this heart-tugging piece that goes like this:

"Did you live as a child in the '50s, '60s or '70s? Looking back, it's hard to believe that we have lived as long as we have.

"As children we would ride in cars with no seat belts or air bags. Riding in the back of a ute on a warm day was always a special treat. Our baby cots were covered with bright colored lead-based paint. We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, doors or cabinets, and when we rode our bikes we had no helmets (not to mention hitchhiking!). We drank water from the garden hose and not from a bottle. Horrors. We would spend hours building our billy-carts out of scraps and then we rode down the hill, only to find out that we forgot the brakes. After running into the scrub a few times, we learned to solve the problem. We would leave home in the morning and play all day, and as long as we were back when the streetlights came on, there was no problem. No one was able to reach us all day. No cell phones. Unthinkable.

"We played brandings, and sometimes the ball would really hurt. We got cut and broke bones and broke teeth, and there were no lawsuits from these accidents. They were accidents. No one was to blame, but us. Remember accidents? We had fights and punched each other and got black and blue and learned to get over it. We ate brownies, bread and butter, and drank spiders but we were never overweight... we were always outside playing. We shared one Schweppes with four friends, from one bottle, and no one died from these.

"We did not have Playstations, Nintendo 64, X-Boxes, video games at all, 99 channels on cable, videotape movies, surround sound, personal cell phones, Personal Computers, Internet chat rooms... we had friends. We went outside and found them.

"We rode bikes or walked to a friend's home and knocked on the door, or rang the bell or just walked in and talked to them. Imagine such a thing. Without asking a parent! By ourselves! Out there in the cold cruel world! How did we do it? We made up games with sticks and tennis balls and we ate worms and, although we were told it would happen, we did not grow three eyes nor did the worms live inside us forever.

"Come cricket, footballs or athletics season, we registered, and not everyone made the team. Those who didn't had to learn to deal with disappointment...

"Some students weren't as smart as others so they failed a year and were held back to repeat... Horrors. Tests were not adjusted for any reason... period. Our actions were our own. Consequences were accepted.

"The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke a law was unheard of. They actually sided with the establishment, imagine that!

"This generation has produced some of the best risk-takers and problem-solvers and inventors, ever. The past 50 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas. We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned to deal with it all. And YOU'RE one of them. Congratulations!"

A New Year's gift

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

AS his "New Year's gift" to me and to Maribel Ongpin, who also wrote a scathing column based on his e-mail message, John Silva sent us copies of letters addressed either to him or to officials of Smart and Globe, all uniformly agreeing with his views on the blighting of the Philippine countryside by these telecommunications firms.

By way of background, I wrote a column essentially supporting Silva's observations about how roadside banners, most of them trumpeting Smart's "Addict" services in time for the Advertising Congress in Baguio, had ruined the landscape and the views on the drive all the way through Central and Northern Luzon and all around Baguio. I was moved to write the column, even if I was quoting John only from memory, because of what I had seen on our drive up to Baguio more than a week after the Ad Congress: the self-same banners that Silva deplored, only this time made more unsightly because they were dirty and bedraggled by then. By some serendipitous circumstance, that column was published in this paper on the same day as Silva's article, in the form of a "Commentary."

"Many of the support letters are poignant," Silva writes. "There's a lot of concerned citizens out there. Most touching is the last one, (which) I received yesterday. A Mr. Calayag writes about being angry too. I write back urging him to write to the cell phone companies. He writes back saying he will and that he is writing from Antarctica. A maritime engineer on a resort ship somewhere in the ice caps yet still concerned about our country. Touching."

* * *

WHILE most of the letters are addressed or directed at Smart and its president, Napoleon Nazareno, some are likewise addressed to Gerardo Ablaza, president of Globe.

One letter, obviously written around the Christmas season, observes: "We don't need to travel to Baguio or some far away place to see the trash created by the two giant telecom companies. Just go to Ortigas Street in Greenhills and you will see Globe (signs) made out to resemble Christmas balls hanging from the trees lined up in the center of the street. It is lamentable!"

Another correspondent, who sounds like an ardent environmentalist, comments: "I wonder when people will learn that driving nails into trees is the beginning of the end of the tree's life. It's 'amazing' indeed that even after all our 'environmental awareness' we still do not relate what we do and how it can contribute positively or negatively towards the environment. I wonder how many people involved in the putting up of these signs are later photographed planting trees in the papers? Oh the irony..."

"I'm with you on this one!!! I HATE billboards!" writes another incensed correspondent. "I was there in Baguio during ad congress weekend. Might I add... Globe was also very guilty of plastering their 'G' signs everywhere. I was offended and annoyed that, because they ran out of trees and walls to plaster, they attached mobile billboards on every freaking jeepney in Baguio City—makeshift mobile billboards, connected by flimsy wires and wooden beams. Hello! Accident waiting to happen!"

* * *

SOME of the messages sent by Silva not only echoed his sentiments but even went so far as to advocate action points, from a boycott, a "shame" campaign against the executives of the concerned companies, to forwarding the message to officials concerned, especially in the tourism department.

Many, though, simply spoke of nostalgia about the pristine landscapes that used to be available for free to anyone who took time to drive down the highway from Manila to any point of Luzon (though the beauty of the countryside in Visayas and Mindanao is similarly threatened by advertisers). A writer, who sounds like an avid mountaineer, expressed this sentiment so evocatively:

"In the mountains, we learned something amazingly simple but very important... leave no trace. Mount Pulag and its stewards do not even have to put this in printed paper or thousands of billboards. The place itself and the experience it gave us etched that dearly in our hearts already...

"No matter how hi-tech or expensive the gadgets we own, and yes, we still bring (these) from our urban enclaves to natural places, they can never surpass the fulfillment of witnessing the grace of nature laid bare. No words can capture that message, that sense of privilege to partake in something that's beyond the power of humans to create; not even the smartest advertising text byte.

"There are no advert billboards YET in Mount Pulag and the road to it, God forbid. But back from our trip, we were reminded of how desensitized we city creatures have become to invasive advertisement...

"Reaching the pavements of Edsa, I wondered aloud, is a class suit against invasive advertisment possible? The right to clear and wide views of skies and nature is as much a right as that to clean air. My lawyer-friend said why not.

"If a decent plea falls on deaf ears, why not indeed?"

* * *

SILVA writes that he's meeting with both Ablaza and Nazareno next week and during those meetings, he plans to first "ceremoniously present them with banners that have fallen and are now trash." He will then offer "to give lectures on aesthetics, public domain, and corporate responsibility for both their marketing departments and their ad agencies," and for "compensation" will demand that "they put in money for public service ads in print, radio and TV, reminding the politicians and the public about Comelec rules on political advertising."

Let's hope Smart and Globe bite, and that the "uglification" of our environment will not proceed apace with this year's electoral campaign. What a great gift to the Filipino people, John!

The Gospel according to Dick

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

LIKE I've been talking to the walls for all the good it has done. Repeat after me now: nothing is ever entirely black or entirely white. We are what we are because of choices we have made and while up to a certain point parents can be blamed after that, we should accept responsibility for our actions and for what we have become without pointing accusing fingers at anyone. This attitude of "*inapi*," "*inaapi*," "*aapihin*" is not going to get us anywhere. It's more than about time we stop thinking of ourselves as victims and time that politicians stopped presenting themselves as our saviors. Enough already; *nakakapagod*.

If you're wondering what I'm referring to it's that P170 million of your money and mine that's been utilized to create a light and sound representation of purportedly Philippine history in Intramuros by the Department of Tourism and Secretary Richard Gordon, a history major from—you wouldn't believe—the Ateneo.

The theme is that Spain didn't do a damn thing for the Philippines except oppress, exploit and humiliate her. Before that we lived in peace and harmony, trading with and respected by our neighbors—nothing said about slave raids or existence of slavery, tribal disagreements or that the inhabitants themselves were second generation colonials from neighboring countries or that there was no nation to speak of. Everything was hunky dory until the Spaniards came along, who were in turn humiliated by Lapu-Lapu (whoever did the statue had Arnie S of CA obviously in mind). The quarrel between Tupas and Lapu-Lapu is not mentioned. And if Sebastian el Cano circumnavigated the globe, it was a lucky fluke.

Remember that this is partly about the Walled City so it's explained that the reason for the construction of the walls according to the DOT's version was to show Spanish might and to intimidate the natives who had to labor for free. Nothing is said about Limahong and the fact that he was at the point of taking over the city, not to mention threats from the Dutch and the British. Shades of the Imeldific and the construction of the film center: there's this "*kawawang*" mannequin buried under fallen stones. It is mentioned repeatedly that we weren't allowed within the walls except as servants. (Since the exhibit stops in 1898 and does not include the American or Japanese occupations, the American policy of not allowing dogs and Filipinos into the Army & Navy Club isn't mentioned.)

The method utilized to get the script moving is either to have a narrator speak or "dialogue" is heard where Tagalog is spoken with a "Spanish" accent—like in local movies about evil *hacenderos* declaring that the natives shouldn't be taught Spanish and they should be enslaved like chickens! Needless to say there are no archival or historical texts presented such as the fact that Philip II abolished slavery but the *datus* complained that there'd be no one then left to work the fields.

Furthermore, the reason we accepted being colonized, exploited, maltreated, etc., etc. is due to the Catholic religion and the evil friars (forget Benavidez, Salazar and anyone else. Remember there was nothing good in all this) who browbeat and hypnotized the stupid natives into believing their reward would be great in heaven and they were here to suffer. Therefore the message coming through is that the Intramuros walls should be torn down since these are symbols of oppression (my late brother thought the Philippine Estates Authority, MegaWorld or the Sobrepeñas may as well develop the space) and we should also get rid of the Catholic religion. Suffering is not redemptive; it's humiliating.

Although it is claimed that the Spanish colonizers refused to educate the Filipinos, it is mentioned that Jose Rizal went to Sto. Tomas without stating that it is a university older than Harvard and established by those nasty friars, in this case the Dominicans. Going by this version, Rizal spent his time abroad in Moulin Rouge where he got a liberal education. Nothing is mentioned of his Spanish education. Or that he wrote the "Noli" and the "Fili" in pure Castilian, which language his countrymen were not allowed to learn, but despite that it inspired them to rebel.

Perhaps the height of irony is the recitation of "Mi Ultimo Adios" in English and the playing of the song, "Philippines, My Philippines" that in case the scriptwriter forgot (or is not aware) uses the tune of "Maryland, My Maryland" since it was composed during the time of that other colonial power, the United States of America. It ends with Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo declaring the Philippine republic while Admiral Dewey probably sneered. No, nothing is shown of Admiral Dewey or Yamashita. It's as though the next 50 years didn't happen.

In closing we are exhorted in a short film to go on to the creation of a "bagong bayan" led by no less than the secretary of tourism, Richard Gordon, a clear and obvious political campaign message. "We are above the walls of our colonial past" but guess what? You can see the Filipino flag but that of the United States as well. (Good grief!) And no, I don't think this is any way of attracting tourists (I thought that's what his department was supposed to do) or of making the Filipino feel good about himself or his history. And since there won't be an official protest, let us thus continue the mis-education of the Filipino.

The eighth sin

YOUNG BLOOD

Pamela So

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—**Ed.**

PRIDE. Envy. Anger. Avarice. Sloth. Gluttony. Lust. As if these seven deadly sins were not enough to make humankind run out of confessional booths, an eighth corporal sin has all too suddenly evolved to the point of no return. The eighth—and probably most ubiquitous—sin: Vanity.

Case in point: A friend of mine bought a drool-worthy pair of pointy shoes with even pointier heels to match when such shoes were all the rage. Problem is, she merely commuted to work and thus could not wear her au courant new footsies to traverse the lengthy distance. The solution? She brings the pair of feet murderers, shoebox and all, in an oversized paper bag while she wears her ugly/comfy/ordinary shoes throughout the duration of her commute. The bizarre shoe-switching phenomenon occurs right after she arrives and right before she leaves the office. Just so she can actually wear the shoes amid frantic typing sessions inside her workstation. Indeed, the price one must pay for beauty. No pain, no gain, no vain!

I was at Temple in Greenbelt 3 when I overheard two girls conversing as we patiently waited our turn in the longer-than-long line to use the bathroom. (Presumably, most of us were there not to heed to the call of nature, but to heed to the call of vanity, i.e. reapply our makeup and redo our hair.) One of the girls commented that almost all the girls in the club were pretty. Looking around, I couldn't agree more. These days, unpretty girls are about as rare a find as perfect men. The multibillion-dollar beauty industry is making sure of that, with lipsticks slathering on to vainglorious lips faster than the manufacturers can package them into tempting tubes.

Male vanity is no exception to the norm, either. Most of our gender counterparts have become as vain as we are (maybe even more), although they would never care to acknowledge that oh-so-macho fact. I was practically bowled over at one of the Beauty Bar counters when I found out that, yes, male skincare lines are apparently already out on the market.

But why the sudden irrepressible urge to be vain? Come to think of it, vanity is nothing but a colossal pocket-driller and wallet-deflator, an anesthesia-less origination of self-inflicted pain (physical or otherwise), and a my-dog-ate-my-homework excuse to procrastinate and be on a constant eleventh-hour schedule. In spite of all these, however, the universal populace still seems to hunger for a humongous slice of the vanity pie. No wonder Vicki Belo dons diamonds as if they were mere pebbles she found in her backyard!

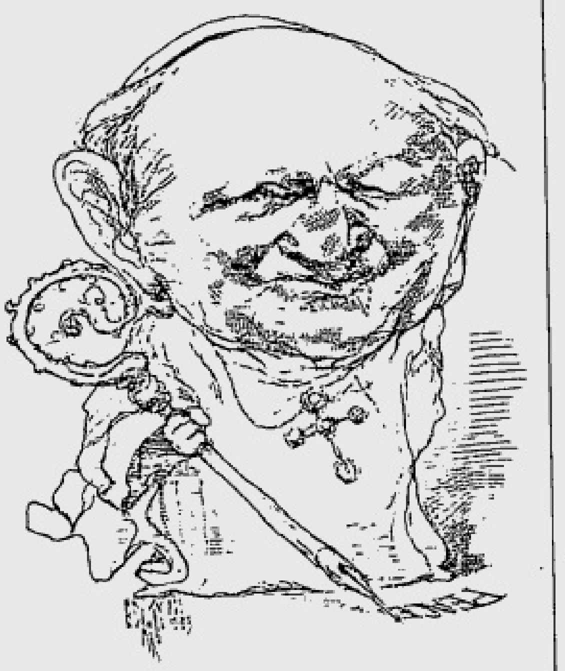
I guess if truth be told, when it comes to vanity, the pros outweigh the cons significantly. When one is physically appealing or conforms to society's standard of beauty, everything else ostensibly conforms to that person as well. As I would like to put it, for a beautiful person life is just as beautiful. Beautiful people do not have to be born with silver spoons in their mouths to have everything laid out for them on a silver platter. Life for them is like picking out the most delectable-looking hors d'oeuvres from a tray of mouthwatering gastronomic delights. People of beauty seemingly have the best in everything—general lives, careers, significant others, opportunities and even service. The classic anecdote comes from one of my closest friends who used to be an intern at a company in Eastwood. My friend happens to be one of the extremely few people I know who does not have a drop of vanity running through her veins. She is not exactly the dress-to-impress type. A major life lesson she learned the hard way was this: To be served in the Eastwood restaurants, you should look nice and dress nice. Otherwise, you have but three options in order to get a decent meal: (1) bring your *baon*, (2) journey to Jollibee, or (3) starve to death.

These are things that should not be facts at all, but remain facts nevertheless. It becomes no surprise then that people would rather suffer through atrocities than look remotely unattractive to no one in particular. I myself am guilty as charged, which is why I can fondly relate to my pointy-shoe friend's peculiar predicament. To be brutally honest, I would gladly sacrifice punctuality for vanity without so much as batting an eyelash. For my part, I think there is absolutely nothing wrong with wanting to look my best. No one is perfect, and it takes a little effort on our part to ultimately achieve that yearned perfection.

Yet, in our individual quest for beauty, it wouldn't hurt to go by the saying that beauty is NOT only skin deep. Apart from exterior appearances, interior appearances count a lot. Often lost among the chaotic mayhem of titillating commodities, inner beauty is essentially what earns us the most pretty or *pogi* points at the end of the day. It is a luminous emission from deep within a person's soul, and it is precisely what makes one's outward beauty outshimmer the rest. Hence, bona fide vanity should be a manifestation of one pulling out all the stops to become beautiful inside-out.

Pamela So, 21, works for a company involved in the shoes and bags industry.

IN THE NEWS



Pope John Paul II

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To save a dying sugar industry

DESPITE its advocacy for free trade, the United States continues to protect its sugar farmers through subsidies and import quotas. Only about 15 percent of US sugar is imported under its quota rules, and while the world price is 7 cents a pound, US businesses and consumers must pay close to 21 cents. According to the International Herald Tribune, preserving this spread costs US consumers an estimated $2 billion.

While this US sugar policy hurts US consumers, its worst impact is on poor countries like the Philippines. The United States continues to talk of importing as much as 2 billion tons which would benefit the poor countries and the US economy but all the United States has been doing so far is to talk about it. Our country used to export to the United States one million tons. Now, we can export only 140,000 tons.

Recently, President Bush lifted the 30 percent tariff on foreign steel rather than risk retaliation from the European Union, Japan, Norway, etc. But those countries have clout. They do not rely on simple fairness, not even on World Trade Organization rules. They make things happen. We cannot even stop the smuggling of refined sugar, causing havoc to our local industry.

It is time for us to add to our sugar crop. Our national energy plans should encourage the production of ethanol or the blending of ethanol and gasoline. Our food technologists and sugar planters should try to develop new products or reinvent sugar, like sugar laced with rum or whisky in the same concept as Europe is popularizing chocolates laced with rum or whisky. Even Cambodia and Thailand try to export their palm and coconut sugar to Europe. Our sugar planters should not be too passive about seeking a larger share of specialty sugar. Before the war, a popular grandmother's drink was Mola-Cola or molasses with cola. Food technologies and the sugar planters represented by the Sugar Regulatory Authority should get together. Let's bridge the gap to meet the challenges of our dying industry.

—EDUARDO F. HERNANDEZ,
executive director,
Center for Farming Landowners,
2/F First Life Center,
174 Salcedo St.,
Legaspi Village, Makati City

Valuing the breath of life

"THE LORD God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into the nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being." (Genesis 2, 7)

At that moment of Divine Exhalation, life entered and began in the lifeless human form. God's breath was the beginning of His first human's life. In fact, God's breath was the beginning of all life. God's breath, so sweet, so pure, so rich, once released continually sustains life. All that breathes and enjoys life then praises God. (Psalm 150, 6) Breath is life. Breath is praise and thanksgiving. Breath indeed is prayer.

When we breathe, we absorb life-giving oxygen into the depths of our lungs, our guts, our being. Health is the effective absorption of life-giving air into the lungs and eventually into each organ which make up the complex system of every living body. When oxygen is insufficient or the respiratory system- from nostrils, to larynx, esophagus and lungs—is blocked, health is threatened.

Various respiratory diseases already plague so many of us. Tuberculosis, chronic bronchitis, emphysema and lung cancer are widespread, thanks to cigarettes, vehicular exhausts, industrial smoke, domestic smoke of all kinds and last New Year's Eve fireworks and firecrackers.

When God breathed air into the nostrils of the first humans, air was pure and did not know the impurities that now pollute it. The first humans had not discovered fire. There was no burning. Food was natural and uncooked. No tree was cut and burned for firewood or fuel. No mountain was mined for coal. No desert or ocean was drilled for oil. Today, fires are raging everywhere. Some are friendly and many are not. The air is thick with the soot and smoke from everything and anything that burns.

The air is no longer pure because life is no longer simple and no longer pure. We have lost the art of enjoying the natural. We prefer air-conditioned air to natural air. We prefer cars to a simple walk, bike or running. We prefer cooked and processed food to fresh fruits and vegetables. We prefer malls, cinemas, entertainment centers, theme parks to the countryside, seaside and forests. We prefer looking at giant billboards advertising the latest gadget, food, hairstyle, rubber shoes, cellphone or makeup to beholding the Face of God that comes alive in our hearts with every deep and deliberate breath taken in deep prayer.

As we welcome 2004, why don't we open our lungs and spirits and once again inhale that elemental Breath of Life and let go of all that has polluted us from food, cheap entertainment to politics? And as we join all of creation in this miracle of breath, why don't we do Sister Air and each other a favor: *"Tigil putok, Tigil usok, Tanggal Pusok!"*

—FR. ROBERTO P. REYES,
Parish of Our Lady of the
Miraculous Medal,
Project 4, Quezon City

A charade of justice

"ONLY in the Philippines can this happen." The Sandiganbayan is truly now a court of "injustice." The judges know this and they are acting accordingly. After all, there is always the Supreme Court that will render the final judgment. Nothing is final in the Sandiganbayan. It is a court of "corruption and double standard" as we, the people, are aware.

Joseph Estrada knows this, too. If he is allowed to go to the United States, that will free him from the Sandiganbayan and all the charges, especially if his friend FPJ succeeds in winning the election. In the meantime, the Philippines will suffer and continue to be the "basket case" of Asia.

Unfortunately, GMA is also a part of this charade. All this hypocritical "compassion and humanitarian consideration" according to her spokesperson, Mike Defensor, is a big joke. Since when is a criminal under trial entitled to anything? Only in the Philippines can this happen. Why does GMA not release all criminal prisoners for "compassion and humanitarian consideration," at least for Christmas Day?

The Sandiganbayan is not under fire; it has gone way beyond its mandate and credibility. The whole country and its citizens are sinking with it, too.

—SERGIO J. MONTINOLA,
4 Saturn St., Bel Air 2,
Makati City

Spare trees from election posters

THE ENVIRONMENT is the concern of everybody.

Trees are part of the environment. They are the sanctuaries of the human spirit. They nurture man by cleaning the air we breathe.

Thus, we will vote for candidates who do not post their election posters on trees and electric posts and walls and fences of public structures.

—REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF
WOMEN'S CLUBS OF THE
PHILIPPINES, NATIONAL
COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF THE
PHILIPPINES,
RURAL IMPROVEMENT CLUBS OF
THE PHILIPPINES,
ROTARY CLUB INTERNATIONAL,
SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL,
ZONTA INTERNATIONAL, METRO
MANILA COUNCIL OF WOMEN
BALIKATAN MOVEMENT,
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF
THE PHILIPPINES

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Why don't militant groups unite for 2004?

IF the militant groups really want to help make our country great again, instead of mounting rallies and demonstrations against every administration sitting in Malacañang and on sundry issues that the media publicizes, here is what I would like to suggest.

All the major militant groups should coalesce and set up a common list of candidates in the May 2004 elections from the president, to senators and representatives. Their chosen slate should be a sure winner. The big militant groups like Akbayan, Sanlakas, Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino, Kilusang Mayo Uno, Bayan, Bayan Muna, Alsa Masa, Bukluran, Gabriela, Partido ng Manggagawa, Grupo ng Magsasaka, Mangingisda, Sakada have at least 500,000 members each nationwide.

All they need to do is unite at the most 20 militant groups into one big political party and form a unified slate from the topmost down to the level of mayors and I'm sure, with their members alone, their ticket will win the elections.

The 20 militant groups and their members and the families of their members can represent a voting bloc of about 14 million. Votes from sympathetic sectors should make a landslide victory for them not just plausible. And with so many candidates for the presidency, the party of the coalesced militant groups would be a force to consider seriously. But of course, they should convince first their members and their families to vote for their candidates and not other candidates.

Also, they don't need to spend so much money for the campaign sorties since all they need to do is meet with their members and tell them to vote for their list of candidates and if possible convince other people like their families and friends, to vote for their candidates also. If they win, they can appoint qualified members to positions of importance to their causes. They can do something effective about the demands they have been shouting out in the streets all these years.

What do you think? If they can do this, they can count on my and my family's votes.

—ALFREDO GABRIEL,
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia,
agabriel@pca.gov.sa

Firemen's woes

I WOULD like to react to the claim of Metro Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando when he was quoted (PDI, 12/17/03, P. A22) as saying that *"Mas masipag pa 'yung mga volunteers sa kanila* (Volunteer firemen are more dedicated than they)," referring to the fire that occurred last Dec. 16, 2003 at the corner of Edsa and Monte de Piedad Street in Cubao. His allegation does not only diminish the already very low morale of our firemen but it also does not in anyway help solve the problem.

While it is true that we cannot compare the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) to our volunteer firefighters, not only in terms of equipment, I strongly disagree with the negative judgment that the former are less dedicated than our volunteer firemen. I would like to emphasize that our firefighters are experienced in firefighting operations and they have the technical know-how in firefighting techniques.

But every time a fire occurs, we seldom hear good things said about our firefighters despite the many risks they take on themselves until the fire is put out. The demands are many and from all quarters for firefighters to be more effective in performing their duties, but when was the last time someone looked into why firemen are using worn-out protective gear or dilapidated and sometimes defective fire trucks or get lower pay than their counterparts in the Philippine National Police?

—F/SR INSP. RENATO B. MARCIAL,
public information officer,
Bureau of Fire Protection
Regional Office V,
2/F ANST Bldg.,
Capt. F. Aquende Drive,
Old Albay District, Legazpi City

Libingan is in Taguig, not Makati

IN SEVERAL news stories, the most recent of which relates to the state burial honors accorded the late Foreign Secretary Blas Ople, the INQUIRER made references to the Libingan ng mga Bayani as part of Makati.

With due respect, let me point out that the Libingan ng mga Bayani at Fort Bonifacio is in Taguig. Makati itself does not even claim jurisdiction over the Libingan ng mga Bayani.

In fact, all of Fort Bonifacio is part of Taguig and it is Taguig which exercises jurisdiction over it.

Both the judicial and executive branches recognize the jurisdiction of Taguig over Fort Bonifacio.

The Court of Appeals upheld the injunction order issued by the Regional Trial Court of Pasig, enjoining the City of Makati "from exercising jurisdiction over, making improvements on, or otherwise treating as part of its territory... the remaining portion of Parcel 4, Psu-2031, and the part of Parcel 3, Psu-2031, which together constitute the 'Inner Fort' or military camp proper of Fort Bonifacio." The Inner Fort adverted to in the court orders include the BCDA property. The injunction order has long become final and executory.

President Ramos issued a special patent covering the 217-hectare area which includes the Global City in favor of the Fort Bonifacio Development Corp. pursuant to RA 7227, which patent in turn led to the issuance of a title in favor of FBDC. Both the special patent and the title state that the property is in Taguig. President Estrada did likewise with respect to two adjoining areas covering 23.47 and 75.64 areas, respectively. Again, both the special patents and the resulting titles state that the lands are in Taguig.

Needless to say, both the BCDA and the FBDC, as well as the lot buyers, secure permits from and pay their taxes to the Municipal Government of Taguig. As the saying goes, "the proof of the pudding is in the eating."

—SIGFRIDO R. TINGA,
mayor, Taguig,
Taguig Municipal Hall,
General A. Luna Street,
Tuktukan, Taguig, Metro Manila

Progress and preservation of heritage

ANTONIO J. Montalvan (Kris-Crossing Mindanao, PDI, 12/15/03) will not vote for Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo because she did not stop the productive conversion of the Mehan Garden in Manila and Huluga heritage site in Cagayan de Oro City.

While it is true that valuable traces of the Filipino cultural heritage could be preserved, it is also necessary that some must give way to other prolific structures if it will help improve the living condition of the present and future Filipino generation. This is a long and debatable issue. But what is important is that GMA, aside from respecting the autonomous freedom of Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and Cagayan de Oro City Mayor Vicente Emano, likewise proved that she is for the development of local communities. If this will get her more votes, so be it.

If the desire of Montalvan and those like-minded will be conceded, we might as well bring the *karetela* back to our streets.

—CLARO Y. TALAGA,
Angeles Zone Two,
Tayabas, Quezon

Assassinations send chills through Iraqi city

NEWS ANALYSIS

Seb Walker

MOSUL, Iraq—Gunshots ring out in a quiet district of the Iraqi city of Mosul, and with a screech of tires masked gunmen make their getaway leaving another prominent figure lying dead on the street outside his home.

Witnesses' description of the Dec. 28 killing of Adil al-Hadidi, a lawyer working with coalition forces, mirrored that of Sheikh Talal al-Khaledi, a local tribal head, and Youssef Khoshi, a chief investigative judge, shot dead by unknown assailants. All were killed in the same week.

With no arrests so far, police in Mosul, Iraq's third largest city set in the far north of the country, are tense and frustrated by the phenomenon.

"It's always the same thing: a drive-by shooting by masked men in a particular make of car," said a police officer stationed at the city's morgue where all the bodies were taken.

"It's turning into a ghost story." The victims could have been targeted because of their links to the new administration in Iraq. Hadidi was the liaison officer between Mosul lawyers and the Coalition Appointed Attorney Program, a development committee and training scheme sponsored by the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority.

"He had to visit our offices frequently for this," said Gary Masapollo, a senior CPA official in Mosul.

"If you look at the killings of all three men, the common denominator between them is that they were part of the governing body in some form—but there is a wider program of intimidation going on."

In fact, the killings are just the latest in a long line of high-profile assassinations going back for months, including a high court judge, a police colonel and a chief translator for the US military, among others.

According to police officials, the assassinations of prominent Mosul figures are scare tactics adopted by insurgents desperate to disrupt the progress the city has made.

"All of these people were attacked because they were soft targets," said Brigadier Hikmat Mahmoud, spokesperson for the Mosul police directorate.

"It's an attempt to destabilize the situation here. Twenty of my police officers have also been killed—these people just want to hit the reconstruction effort."

But local journalist Roaa al-Zrary has a different explanation for the killings which she has been investigating since they began in October with the murder of outspoken newspaper editor Ahmed Showkat—her father.

"These are carefully chosen targets and they are killed in a very professional manner," she said. "What connects them is that they were either Baath party members who have started to work with the Americans, or they were involved with current operations against the Baathists." Mosul, a mixed Arab-Kurdish city of about one million, was heavily Baathist under the former government, with more than 60 percent of the population members of the party.

Sheikh al-Khaledi was a member of the former president's national council in Baghdad and Khoshi was a judge for two years before the fall of the government, a position that would have required Baath party membership.

Zrary maintains her father was killed because he had discovered information about Baath party activists in Mosul, and that the subsequent killings are as much about settling party scores as intimidating "collaborators."

Mohammed al-Zibari, the director of the North Oil Distribution Company, can speak with experience about the impact of the killings on Mosul's officials.

In November, he survived an attempt on his life in which his son was killed. A week later, a police colonel in charge of protecting the company's facilities was gunned down outside his house. Then the fuel manager of the company was wounded in an assassination attempt.

"When we got our positions we knew there were risks to the job. We expect that to continue, but we promised to serve our country and will carry on as long as we're alive," Zibari said.

Coalition authorities say they are aware of the risks to those working with the administration in Mosul, but that the wider issue is the capability of the Iraqi police.

Nowadays, access to Zibari's office is blocked by a succession of armed police. Senior members of the local government move around the city only in heavily armed convoys, and fears are increasing about who the gunmen will target next.

"We can't work out why our colleague was killed, so now we are all scared for our own safety," said another judge at the court where Youssef Khoshi worked. He refused to give his name.

Reuters

IS IT OVER FOR PING?

Comelec accredits coalition party behind FPJ

By Martin P. Marfil

THE COMMISSION on Elections yesterday accredited the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP), the coalition of parties behind the presidential bid of Fernando Poe Jr., to take part in the 2004 elections and enjoy the privileges of a dominant party.

The Comelec's second division said that the three parties in the coalition—Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP), Partido ng Masang Pilipino (PMP), and the Partido ng Demokratikong Pilipino-Laban (PDP-Laban)—have shown their capacity to wage a nationwide campaign.

"Wherefore, pursuant to Article IX, Section 2 (3) of the Constitution and Rule 32 of the Comelec Rules of Procedure, the petition for registration as a coalition of political parties of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) is hereby granted, to entitle the same to the rights and privileges granted to political parties with national constituency," the division, composed of Presiding Commissioner Ralph Lantion and commissioners Mehol Sadain and Florentino Tuason Jr., said.

Former Comelec Chair Harriett Demetriou said the ruling in effect recognizes the LDP faction led by Sen. Edgardo Angara as the one authorized to nominate its official candidates.

Demetriou said the Comelec could have deferred the decision pending the resolution concerning the issue on who has the power to nominate the LDP official candidates: the LDP secretary general, Makati Rep. Agapito "Butz" Aquino, or Angara, the LDP chair.

Aquino's LDP wing had earlier nominated Sen. Panfilo Lacson as the party's official presidential candidate. Angara is supporting Poe.

"In other words, it (Angara faction) is the recognized LDP and FPJ is the recognized candidate of LDP and not Lacson," she said.

But in an interview, Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos said that the decision did not adversely affect the bid of the LDP-Lacson wing to be granted the authority to name the official candidates of the LDP as they still have to decide the issue on Monday.

"We accredited the KNP as a coalition. We are not saying that it is the recognized dominant party. Look, there is no doubt this one (LDP) is the dominant party, now who will sign for the dominant party, the authorized signatory, that is the question," Abalos said.

Abalos added that one, referring to Lacson, is an LDP candidate while the other, Poe, is a KNP candidate.

The LDP nomination issue was raised after Angara told the Comelec that he had the authority to nominate its official candidate.

This was opposed by the Lacson faction which maintained that Aquino had the power as he was the secretary general.

"They (the Angara faction) could argue that impliedly that the Angara faction is recognized because otherwise, they should have deferred the resolution (because of the LDP issue)," Demetriou said.

Her comments were solicited by reporters following a three-page Comelec resolution issued yesterday, apparently timed to coincide with the filing of the certificates of candidacy of Poe and his party mates.

FPJ's Senate slate springs a few surprises

From page A1

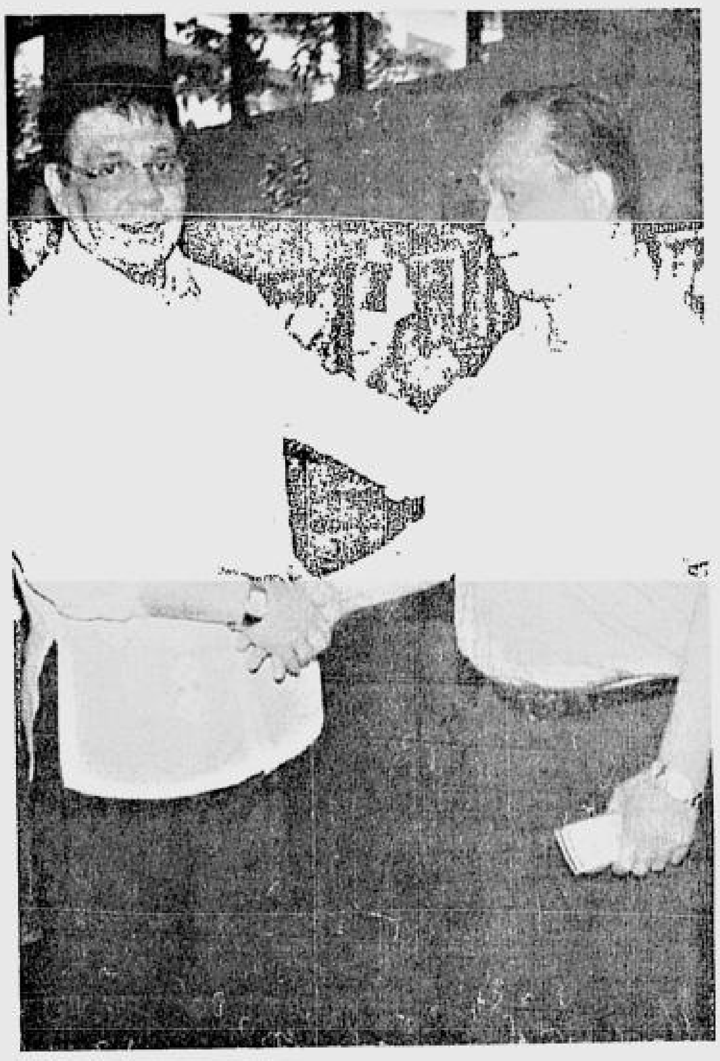
and Imee Marcos (Ilocos Norte); and Estrada supporter Jamby Madrigal.

But of the 12, only Pimentel, Rasul-Bernardo, Lim, Dilangalen and Madrigal joined Poe and his running mate Sen. Loren Legarda in filing their certificates of candidacy at the Commission on Elections office in Intramuros, Manila, yesterday.

Osmeña had filed his COC last month.

Sen. Edgardo Angara, chair of the KNP national executive committee, described the senatorial lineup in even terms. "It's a fairly diversified group representing varied talents and geography, as well as a mix of experience and raw talent, and a mix of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds."

HOPEFULS Alfredo Lim, Juan Ponce Enrile and Rep. Didagen Dilangalen wait their turn to file their certificates of candidacy for senator in FPJ's Senate lineup. ERIK ARAZAS



FPJ meets APJ, that's Aquilino Pimentel Jr. who's on the KNP's Senate slate. RUDY ESPERAS

Poe's own choice

Angara said that it was Poe who chose the final line up from a short list of 19 nominees.

Oreta said that Poe did not want any candidates from show business to be part of the slate because he was already representing the movie industry.

Oreta acknowledged that Poe's endorsement of Padilla "surprised" her.

"Caloy (Padilla) is a long time friend of Ronnie and Caloy went to him," Oreta told reporters.

And because the KNP gave Poe full authority on the senatorial ticket, Oreta said that Poe chose him.

Common candidate

Padilla was not in the 19-person short list, she added.

But Angara said that Padilla was in the line up only tentatively."

This after Angara said that Padilla made a statement the other day that he would continue to support Lacson's presidential bid and that he would just be a "guest candidate" of Poe's.

"(Padilla) has to make up his mind because he can't have divided loyalties," Angara said. "We wish he'll make up his mind so that we have no doubt as to his intentions."

He said that Padilla has until Jan. 15, the last day for replacing candidates, to do so.

Reached for comment, Padilla said: "It was not my own decision. I was being placed there as a common candidate. I came to know about it only when the negotiation was done last December 29. I do appreciate it that I was considered by the other side," Padilla explained.

Maceda's preference

Asked why Jinggoy Estrada was not part of the ticket, Angara said that the ex-mayor withdrew his nomination. But Angara did not say why.

But both Oreta and Horacio "Boy" Morales, president of Joseph Estrada's Puwersa ng Masang Pilipino, said that the younger Estrada was excluded because of his pending plunder case before the Sandiganbayan.

"He (Jinggoy) got a little bit hurt but he's okay now," Oreta told reporters yesterday.

"Jinggoy has pending cases with (the) Sandigan(bayan) and on that basis the coalition decided not to include him in the slate," Morales told reporters.

Morales said the younger Estrada was one of eight PMP nominees.

But only four made it: Enrile, Tatad, Madrigal and Dilangalen.

Angara said Maceda was "not so keen" on running for the Senate.

"His preference is for an appointive position," Angara said. He added that Maceda 's two sons were running for Congress.

Administration response

Two administration congressmen yesterday merely shrugged off the decision by Lim and Herrera to jump to the opposition.

Reps. Prospero Pichay Jr. (Lakas, Surigao del Sur) and Prospero Nograles (Lakas, Davao City) said that the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats has a deep bench to choose from for its senatorial lineup.

Pichay said that Lakas was urging Interior Secretary Jose Lina Jr. to fill up Lim's slot in the administration ticket.

"Joey Lina has a 98 percent public awareness rating and he is a worthy candidate," Pichay said.

Pichay also said Lakas was still looking for a 12th candidate to represent the Muslims. *With reports from Carlito Pablo and Cynthia Balana*

Tessie opts out; Jinggoy shut out

From page A1

Estrada said he will run for the lone congressional seat of San Juan after being excluded from Poe's Senate slate.

"*Hindi ako napili* (I was not chosen)," Estrada told the INQUIRER in a phone interview. "I think they have their own reasons for not selecting me."

Asked if he felt bad about the decision, Estrada answered, "Secret."

'Shocked'

At her Urdaneta Village, Makati City residence, Oreta told reporters she had made up her mind as early as the second week of December. She said her husband and children, as well as her colleagues in the opposition, were "surprised and shocked" by her decision.

She also said she called up her nephew, Tarlac Rep. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, during the third week of December, to tell him of her decision and to "sound him off in case he wants to run" (for the Senate).

But she said her nephew was intent on seeking reelection, his third and last term as a congressman from Tarlac.

Opposition leader Sen. Edgardo Angara, who is supporting Poe's bid, said Oreta will help in Poe's election campaign as its "overall overseer."

Campaign managers

Oreta herself said that she, Sen. Vicente Sotto III and Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan would serve as Poe's campaign managers.

She said she would handle "day to day operations," while Sotto will be responsible for public relations and the media, and Honasan will oversee the security aspects of the campaign.

"So it's all down our alley," she said.

Oreta said she had prayed hard for the opposition to resolve its differences on who it would support between Poe and Lacson.

"(But) nothing happened and I took it as a sign (not to run)," she said.

Asked whether she was backing out because she had consistently fared poorly in surveys, Oreta said, "Definitely not."

She said she had the advantage of an incumbent and was "secure" that she would be part of the winning 12.

Family unity

In a statement she also issued, Oreta said she and her husband Len agreed that her not taking part in the 2004 senatorial race was "the least I can do to help preserve the unity in our family."

"..(T)he last thing I believe our family—and Filipino voters for that matter—need right now is to see one more Aquino running under yet another anti-administration ticket," the senator said.

She told reporters that she and her brother might be able to do something to unite the opposition.

"I am with Poe and Butz is with Ping, we might be able to serve as bridges," Oreta added. "In order for us to succeed and achieve what we want, which is a return to a government people can trust, I have to do my share of sacrifice."

In a separate interview, Angara said that Oreta "decided on her own not to seek reelection."

"She had preferential claim to the (senatorial) ticket but she waived it," he added.

Estrada said he had high hopes of winning as San Juan congressman.

High hopes

"I believe Congressman Ronnie will give way," he said, referring to incumbent Rep. Ronaldo Zamora, his father's first executive secretary.

TESSIE AQUINO-ORETA: Waives slot in the opposition Senate slate as already too many Aquinos are on opposing sides. JESS YUSON

JINGGOY ESTRADA: Hurting but understands the politics of exclusion. PDI PHOTO

But deposed President Joseph Estrada was less optimistic.

Speaking from Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal, the ex-President said there was nothing he could do to stop the looming battle royale between his son and Zamora.

"*Wala na tayong magagawa diyan* (There's nothing I can do about it)," Estrada said in a phone interview.

He also explained why his son was not running for the Senate.

"He was advised to withdraw because his mother (Sen. Loi Estrada) was already there in the Senate," said Estrada, who is facing graft and plunder charges before the Sandiganbayan.

Jinggoy, also facing charges before the anti-graft court, is out on bail. *With reports from Armand Nocum and Margaux Ortiz*

Estrada supporters want Loren to apologize

From page A1

while "Edsa III," which came some three months after, was an attempt by pro-Estrada forces to lay siege on Malacanang.

Decision respected

But Estrada himself said that, while his loyalists were "hurt" by Legarda's stand during his impeachment trial, he respected Poe's choice.

"I respect the decision of FPJ," Estrada said, adding that he does not share the view of pro-Estrada leaders who want Legarda to apologize.

"That's no longer needed. That's her thinking," he said, referring to Legarda's stand during his impeachment trial.

Poe's campaign manager, Sen. Vicente Sotto III, called the Poe-Legarda team-up a "healing partnership."

The ticket was "perfection itself," Sotto added.

Healing partnership

"The FPJ-Loren team-up ... epitomizes a healing partnership that this divided nation needs very badly. People would vote for FPJ and Loren into office because of their complementing strengths," he said.

He added: "For the first time in Philippine history, we have a presidential bet and a vice presidential candidate who, together, have the support of the entire spectrum of Philippine society. In contrast, most if not all of the country's past leaders were elected into office by one or two segments of Philippine society, and not overwhelmingly by all sectors of the Filipino nation."

Sotto said that Poe enjoyed the support of B-C-D classes, while Legarda had the backing of the A-B-C classes which, he said, made the partnership "truly representative of the nation."

"Their bases overlap, thus the great divide between the rich and the poor could be better bridged by an FPJ-Legarda administration," he said.

PPA issue

Mesina said another issue that also prevents his group from throwing its support behind Legarda was the Purchase Power Adjustment (PPA). The Manila Electric Co., the power firm owned by the Lopez family, has been accused of earning unconscionably high profits through the controversial PPA. The Lopezes also own the giant ABS-CBN TV network, where Legarda rose to fame as a news anchor and host.

"Definitely we will not support her if her alliance with FPJ is premised on a deal to help the Lopezes recover profit from their power venture, a deal that could translate into higher power rates in Metro Manila," he said.

If this happens, Mesina said, the two million people affiliated with PMAP—most of whom reside in Metro Manila—will be the ones greatly hurt by the power increase.

"Don't you see? The announcement of her bid to run for vice president comes at a time when reports are being floated about of a fresh round of power increase by Meralco," he said.

Horacio "Boy" Morales, president of Estrada's Puwersa ng Masang Pilipino, admitted some opposition members had questioned Legarda's entry to the opposition. But Morales conceded that the process of selecting the running mate was left to Poe.

Split within a split

Without missing a beat, Malacañang officials yesterday jumped on the anti-Legarda train.

"The opposition is definitely not only divided with the split up with (Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who is also running for president) but also (because) former President Estrada is not on board in the FPJ-Loren ticket," said Secretary Michael Defensor, presidential campaign spokesperson, in a briefing in Malacañang.

"I don't think the opposition will be unified but they will be split not only in two ways but three ways because I understand the former President is not happy with the situation," Defensor said.

Loren's support

The controversy over Legarda prompted an administration senator, Juan Flavier, to rush to her defense. Flavier is Legarda's seatmate in the Senate, and one of her closest friends.

He said Legarda "stands out among the vice presidential aspirants because she has the competence, capability and experience."

"As vice president she can support the President in leading the country to attain its aspirations. I have known Loren well enough during her stint at the Senate, and I have nothing but praise for her."

His words were matched by those of leftist groups such as the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, which described Legarda as the most qualified among the vice presidential candidates.

The militant groups, however, challenged the senator to prove that she would stick to her "progressive ideas" and programs and that she is not beholden to the Lopez family.

"Loren has the most substance among the vice presidential candidates. She lends the FPJ camp a semblance of competence because of her track record," said Bayan secretary general Teodoro Casiño.

"The challenge is for her to stick to her progressive ideas and influence FPJ. We hope that she succeeds in drowning out the pro-Estrada voices behind her standard-bearer," Casiño said.

Legarda is a staunch supporter of the peace process between the government and the National Democratic Front.

Meanwhile, opposition leader Sen. Edgardo Angara denied that many members in the opposition were not keen on Legarda, as ex-Sen. Francisco "Kit" Tatad claimed the other day.

"Kit is speaking for himself," Angara said, emphasizing that the Poe-Legarda tandem had been finalized.

"We'll sit down with him and find out his intentions," Angara added. Tatad is part of Poe's Senate slate. *With reports from Norman Bordadora, Gil Cabacungan Jr., Reuters, AFP*

BILLED as the biggest "stumbling block" to President Macapagal's own run for the presidency, Poe and running mate Sen. Loren Legarda pose for screaming fans and supporters after filing their certificates of candidacy.

DENNIS SABANGAN EPA

PMAP
Peace On Earth
DA KING

THE FANS crowd outside the Comelec building hoping to get close to their idol.

RUDY ESPERAS

HUNDREDS more are barred from entry at the Comelec.

RUDY ESPERAS

Thousands mob 'Da King' at Comelec

From page A1

The supporters brandished banners saying "we love you FPJ," and rushed the gate to get closer to their hero as Marine security personnel strained to hold them back.

Bigger venue

Inside the Comelec, officials decided to transfer the venue for the filing of Poe's candidacy to the larger session hall to accommodate the SRO crowd.

Poe declined to make any public statement and was swiftly whisked away in a car, leaving the crowd of fans still chanting "FPJ, FPJ."

'Unbeatable'

Poe's campaign manager, Sen. Vicente "Tito" Sotto, a former movie comedian, later said in a statement that the team of Poe and Legarda was "unbeatable at the polls."

Sotto said that a Poe-Legarda administration "would be marked by dialogue, confidence-building and reconciliation, with emphasis on truth and justice." Sotto also remarked that Filipinos were "sick and tired" of traditional politicians, adding that Poe would draw his support from the poorer classes, who make up the bulk of the population.

Recent surveys put Poe as the front-runner among presidential candidates, followed by former Education Secretary Raul Roco, President Macapagal-Arroyo and former Philippine National Police chief, Sen. Panfilo Lacson.

Who's in, out

Already, the guessing game had started as to who was in or out depending on who was able to slip through the marshals who closed the gates and prevented hundreds from going into the Comelec inner offices.

Movie bit players, marginal entertainment figures like Palito and Amay Bisaya were in. Out of there was the Fernando Poe Jr. for President Movement or FPJPM led by its president Boots Cadsawan, one of the very first unstoppable backers of a Poe presidency.

Cadsawan was stopped at the door of the Comelec after the entry of Poe and his wife, Susan Roces, Legarda, Sotto and some members of his senatorial lineup.

Just too many

Wearing the blue vest of the FPJPM, Cadsawan and other members of his group waited outside the Comelec office while Poe filed his certificate of candidacy.

Asked what he was doing outside, Cadsawan said there were just "too many" Poe supporters and that it was too hard to get into the Comelec session hall.

Cadsawan added that it did not mean that the FPJPM was out of the picture as people already know which group started the candidacy of Poe.

"The important thing is that we were able to convince him, first and foremost ... It's okay, there's no problem," he said, when asked if being left out hurt.

Comelec employees said that Poe, who entered the session hall around 10 a.m., allowed his senatorial candidates to file their candidacies first and waited until 10:33 a.m. before filing his own candidacy.

Poe was the the 47th presidential aspirant to file his candidacy.

Angara absent

The KNP nominations were signed by Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino chair Sen. Edgardo Angara as KNP chair.

Angara, who is seen as the man behind the Poe-Legarda tandem, was not with the party when Poe arrived.

Among those who filed their candidacies with Poe and Legarda were former Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, former Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim, Maguindanao Rep. Didagen Dilangalen, Amina Rasul, who listed her occupation as "consultant" and Jamby Madrigal, who wrote "business" as her occupation.

Other supporters of the opposition senatorial line-up also cooled their heels outside the Comelec office, wearing their own colors. Legarda's group were in white shirts. Others wore red, green and yellow shirts.

Poe arrived at the Comelec compound around 9:45 a.m. after meeting with Legarda at the Manila Hotel for talks which started around 8 a.m.

The actor then boarded Legarda's van and both were whisked off towards the Comelec compound for the filing of their candidacies.

Comelec bias?

Unlike the reception accorded other presidential aspirants who also came with a slew of supporters, Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos was waiting for Poe at an office near the session hall when the actor and his party arrived.

Abalos escorted Poe into the session hall.

Asked if he was not being biased in favor of Poe, Abalos said it was merely courtesy.

"It was impossible for them to go up because there was no elevator. In the case of Bro. Eddie (Villanueva, another presidential aspirant), he told me that he would be arriving around 2 p.m. but arrived around 4 p.m. In the case of Senator Roco, we thought he was arriving 10 a.m. but he arrived earlier at 9 a.m. We are not favoring anyone, "Abalos said.

Aside from Poe, Abalos had also personally accompanied Lacson when he filed his candidacy earlier this week.

Alerted

According to Abalos, Angara lawyers had called him up earlier to inform him that Poe was arriving.

"It was only the lawyers who called me up, particularly the office of Senator Angara (who asked) if I could extend the courtesy of the office. Why not?" he said.

When Poe and his party left, the crowd disappeared, leaving behind their trash—placards, stickers and other election paraphernalia.

Worried

Although he is hugely popular, many are worried about Poe's qualifications for the presidency: he is a high-school drop-out who has never held office or been involved in public service.

Poe is yet to unveil a campaign platform and has avoided giving interviews and appearances where he had been expected to give his position on the country's pressing problems.

His candidacy has also split the opposition with a smaller faction backing Lacson as their presidential candidate.

Poe has been endorsed by ousted President Joseph Estrada, Poe's longtime friend and confidante. *With a report from AFP*

SUPPORTERS like Eddie Garcia and spokesman Sen. Tito Sotto meet with Poe at the Philippine Plaza after filing his certificate of candidacy at the Comelec.

RUDY ESPERAS

WILLIE REVILLAME

Willie Revillame does it again, is axed by ABS-CBN

By Marinel Cruz

THREE strikes and he's out... permanently.

Broadcasting giant ABS-CBN has terminated the contract of Willie Revillame as host of the noontime variety show "Masayang Tanghali Bayan."

In a statement sent to the INQUIRER, ABS-CBN said it terminated its agreement with Revillame after he again "uttered offensive remarks" on the show. The termination was effective Jan. 1.

But Revillame claimed that he was not terminated.

"I resigned," he told the INQUIRER over the phone, saying he filed his resignation letter on Dec. 28.

The network's decision to terminate Revillame's contract was prompted by a complaint made by the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) about Revillame's use of double meaning jokes.

On Dec. 23, MTRCB chair Consoliza Laguardia and a three-member adjudication board met with ABS-CBN executives to complain about Revillame's conduct in the Dec. 19 episode of "MTB."

In that episode, Revillame greeted co-host Mahal, who was celebrating her birthday, by saying, "*Sana ma-devirginize ka na.*"

Revillame also introduced guest Ogie Alcasid as "the Big Bird of Asia." Alcasid was with Regine Velasquez, who is known as Asia's Songbird.

Revillame said the remark he made had "no malicious intent" but was a "slip of the tongue."

The ABS-CBN statement said: "While the network acknowledges the contribution of Mr. Revillame to the program and is saddened by this development, it remains committed in strictly carrying out self-regulation policies, which ultimately is for the benefit and protection of the viewing public."

It was the third time Revillame was punished for alleged vulgar behavior.

In 1999 the MTRCB suspended Revillame and co-hosts John Estrada and Randy Santiago for alleged vulgar behavior and treatment of contestants in the Calendar Girl segment of the show.

Last July ABS-CBN suspended Revillame and Estrada for a week for using the terms "BJ," which is widely understood to mean "blow job," and "Jack Call," which is a euphemism for masturbation.

In another episode, Revillame and Estrada teased Mahal about her cleavage, the censors noted.

Family, friends send off Miko

By Marinel Cruz

"MIKO will do anything to make you laugh, even at his own expense. Thank you, Miko, for making this world a better place."

With those words, Ali Bsaies bade farewell to her son, Miko Sotto, in her eulogy during the 10 a.m. Mass yesterday at the Santuario de San Antonio in Forbes Park, Makati City.

Miko, Marcelino Antonio Carag Sotto III in real life, was laid to rest yesterday afternoon at the Loyola Memorial Park in Parañaque City.

Ali sat on the front pew of the chapel, with former husband Maru Sotto and son Chino.

Ali, an actress and radio commentator, is now married to a Pakistani diplomat based in Mexico City.

A mother's request

"I've listened to wonderful stories of Miko's kindness and humor," said Ali. "Keep him in a small corner of your hearts."

At dawn on Monday, Miko fell from the 9th floor of the San Francisco Gardens Condominium in Mandaluyong City, where he had lived for three years.

Miko was with his cousin, Oyo Boy, son of actor and television host Vic Sotto, when the accident happened. With them were Oyo Boy's friend Benmar Van Eldik and GMA 7 production designer Marko Medina.

Marko said Miko had invited them to come to his place to show them the video camera his girlfriend, Angel Locsin, gave him for Christmas.

An angel to Ali

On Dec. 18, Ali and her son appeared on the show biz-oriented talk show "Sis" on GMA.

"On national television, Miko promised to take care of me," Ali said during the eulogy. "I didn't know he'd give up his body just to do that."

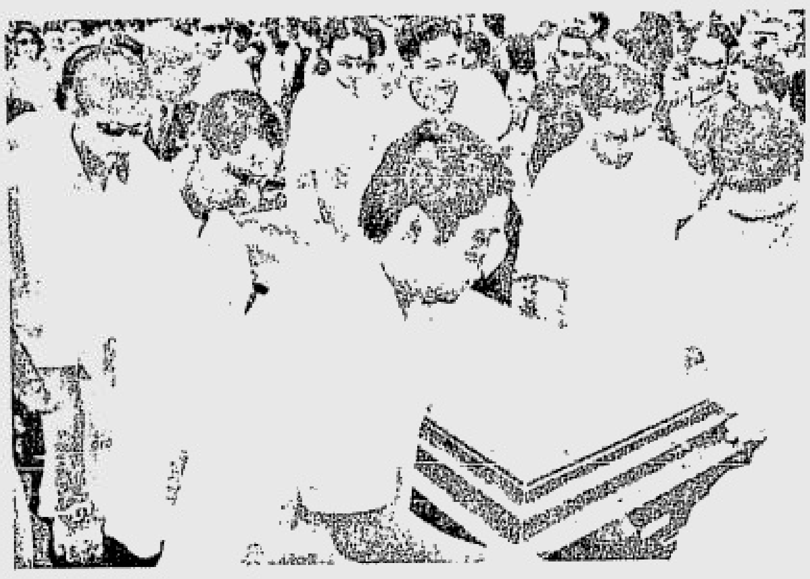
Fr. Jerry Orbos, SVD, officiated the Mass. Oyo Boy, Benmar, as well as Miko's cousins Giancarlo Sotto, Wahoo Sotto and Jeremy Carag acted as pallbearers.

A number of show biz stars close to the Sottos like Tirso Cruz III and wife Lyn Ynchausti, Alicia Vergel, Sandy Andolong, Pinky de Leon, Cory Quirino, Valerie Concepcion, Aiza Marquez and Iya attended the Mass.

Miko's coffin was carried by a Lincoln Navigator, which was escorted by the Makati City police.

His family rode in Coaster vans.

FAMILY and friends take one last look at Miko Sotto before his body is laid to rest at the Loyola Memorial Park in Parañaque City.



MIKO'S girlfriend Angel Locsin (above) seeks comfort from Oyo Boy Sotto. At right, cousins carry the coffin of the young television and movie personality. PHOTOS BY EDWIN BACASMAS

Another fire breaks out in Malabon

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

FROM cold to hot.

A one-hour fire yesterday afternoon gutted a building in Malabon City.

The building served as a cold storage facility for fruits and vegetables.

The fire, which hit the building at the corner of MacArthur Highway and Banana Road in Barangay Potrero, began at 3:45 p.m. and reached Task Force Bravo alarm.

At 5 p.m., fire officials declared that the fire was under control. No one was reported injured as of press time.

According to fire officials, three of the worst fires that had broken out in the Camanava (Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela) area in the last quarter of 2003 were caused by untended candles.

Most slum residents have no access to electricity so they use candles to light up their hovels at night.

The residents also make matters worse by using highly combustible materials in building their shanties.

On Dec. 7, Itang Roxas, 40, lit a candle so she could bathe her mentally ill nephew, Roderick, 19, inside their house in Barangay Libis Tulingan, Caloocan City.

A few minutes later, Roxas took Roderick up to his room, tied his legs, and went out of the house. Next thing she knew, the house was already burning.

She went up to save her son, but because the stair was made of wood, it easily caught fire. Roderick, Roxas and her son, Emmanuel, 6, died in the fire.

On Dec. 21, a fire broke out in R10 Road, North Bay Boulevard South, killing a 6-month-old boy and destroying more than 200 houses. Fire investigators said the fire was caused by an untended candle.

On Dec. 29, another fire hit Caloocan, leaving three people dead and about 900 families homeless.

FO1 Marcelino Espeso said the fire began with an untended candle in one of the houses.

City fire chief Agapito Nacario yesterday warned residents, especially those in squatter areas, to be careful in using candles.

Small alleys leading to the crowded shanties often clogged by panicking residents during fires also delay the work of firefighters, Nacario said. A few seconds of delay could spell bigger disasters.

METROBRIEFS

Commentator beaten up

A MAN claiming to be a commentator on radio stations dwAD and dwBL, yesterday was beaten up by workers of a small carnival in Quezon City. The workers, led by Jose del Rosario, 46, said that they beat up Jun Suyom because the latter had been extorting money from them. Suyom, 45, said he and his wife were passing by the F2 Carnival on Quirino Highway, Novaliches, when the suspects attacked him at 7:45 p.m. Suyom said the suspects wanted to get even with him because he often criticized the carnival workers on his radio program. *Tina Santos*

Suspected cop killer rapped

DEXTER Gapetio, a Bahala na Gang member, has been charged with the murder of PO1 Nelson Gonzales. SPO1 Edmundo Cabal said inquest fiscal Annabel Dollaga-Magabilin upheld the murder charge filed with the Manila Prosecutors Office and ordered Gapetio's arrest. Police said Gapetio, 24, had earlier claimed he was a witness to Gonzales' killing. But investigators became suspicious of Gapetio after they saw spots of blood on the suspect. Gonzales, 34, was stabbed to death on New Year's Eve in Tondo, Manila. *Leila Salaverria*

Knife attack in Valenzuela

RUBEN Adrial on Thursday was said to be drunk when he allegedly stabbed Jose Ocampo, 39, in the chest in Libis, Canumay East, Valenzuela City. Ocampo's relatives—Rolando Regalado and Ricky Guilig—got back at Adrial and used a bolo in hacking him, police said. Adrial is now being treated at the Valenzuela General Hospital, while Ocampo is confined at the Jose Reyes Medical Center. Ocampo's relatives escaped after the incident. *Edson Tandoc Jr.*

Quiapo plunge

Did he jump, accidentally fall, or was he pushed? Police are now investigating the death of Wilmyer Robinos, 35, a student at the Guzman Institute of Technology at the corner of de Guzman and Sigay Street in Quiapo, Manila. SPO4 Alfredo Salazar said Robinos, who also stayed at the school, fell from the building's fifth floor at 7 p.m. on New Year's Day. *Leila Salaverria*

Marquez condemns torching of MMDA Baclaran post

By Margaux Ortiz

PARAÑAQUE Mayor Joey Marquez yesterday condemned the recent burning of a Metropolitan Manila Development Authority office in Baclaran by suspected illegal vendors, but remained steadfast in his belief that the vendors should be "treated humanely."

"We will not tolerate such actions by anyone," Marquez told the INQUIRER in a phone interview, referring to the New Year torching of an MMDA Organized Bus Route office in the Redemptorist area. "I have already instructed the police to secure the area and immediately arrest the suspects."

Marquez also appealed to MMDA officials to sit down with the Parañaque local government and formulate guidelines on how to clear the Baclaran area "properly."

"The MMDA's idea of clearing the area of illegal vendors is violently dispersing them with watchsticks (*batuta*)," Marquez said.

The mayor said he believed that the proper way to clear Baclaran would be to "talk to the vendors and give them another source of livelihood."

He also said the MMDA should also start coordinating with the city government in their clearing operations.

"I've been wanting to talk to the MMDA officials since last year," Marquez said. "But they remain adamant in disrespecting our authority."

But MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando in earlier interviews said that the local government had not done anything to improve the situation in Baclaran.

Fernando stressed that city officials should not raise the vendors' hope that they have the right to occupy sidewalks and streets.

Southern Police District Director Chief Supt. Prospero Noble yesterday said that they will convert the damaged MMDA office into a police outpost.

Noble said he has ordered the deployment of six to eight law enforcers from one of Parañaque's substations to provide round-the-clock protection in the Redemptorist area.

Noble also said that they will meet with MMDA and local government officials on Monday to discuss measures on how to improve the peace and order situation in Baclaran.

Impossible to stop 'jueteng'

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

PHILIPPINE National Police chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. has been succeeding in stopping "jueteng" in many areas in the country.

But how long can he continue to stop jueteng?

For the government to stop the illegal numbers game altogether, it should make it legal.

* * *

Ebdane's predecessors at the PNP and at the defunct Philippine Constabulary/Integrated National Police (PC-INP) could not stop jueteng.

Even then PNP chief Panfilo Lacson was not able to stop jueteng completely. Why? Because his Big Boss, Erap, was receiving money from jueteng lords.

In the case of then PC-INP chief Fidel V. Ramos, he was candid and practical enough to admit that jueteng couldn't be stopped. He proposed, instead, that it be made legal.

* * *

Why can't jueteng be stopped completely?

Because you can't kill an "industry" that has been there for generations. You can stop it for a while, but it will come back with a vengeance.

Besides, many local officials and police officers receive jueteng money. Even some parish priests receive money from jueteng lords for the repair of their churches and other needs.

* * *

I remember the female police director of a Central Luzon province who exposed the jueteng racket after she couldn't get from a jueteng financier the amount equal to what was being given to the provincial governor.

She demanded P1 million a month from the jueteng operator, the amount given to the provincial governor, but was turned down. Before she exposed the jueteng racket in Central Luzon, she was receiving P500,000 a month from the jueteng lord.

She went to Congress and exposed the racket in which she took part.

* * *

Oh, there was a time like now when jueteng was stopped! It was during the watch of Robert Barbers at the Department of Interior and Local Government.

But the jueteng stoppage created a worse problem. Because they had to feed their families, the cabos (supervisors) and bet collectors pushed drugs.

Tens of thousands of people, families of cabos and bet collectors, get food on their tables from jueteng.

* * *

What's the solution to the problem?

Congress should pass a law legalizing the illegal numbers game. Or, the government should let the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor) give franchises to the jueteng lords.

The government will earn oodles and oodles of money in revenue from the multi-billion-peso industry. It will also eliminate corruption among local officials and police officers in areas where jueteng is prevalent.

At the same time, the government will be able to give employment—this time legal—to thousands of cabos and bet collectors.

There's no other solution to the jueteng problem except to make it legal.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
METRO
E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

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TWO WOMEN The most important women in Miko Sotto's life, Ali Bsaies, his mother, and Angel Locsin, his girlfriend (head slumped on coffin), say goodbye to the young actor.
EDWIN BACASMAS

WHAT'S INSIDE

- **Family, friends send off Miko** /A15
- **Willie Revillame does it again, is axed by ABS-CBN** /A15

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SATURDAY,
JANUARY 3, 2004

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SPORTS

A17

E-mail: pr_sports@inquirer.com.ph

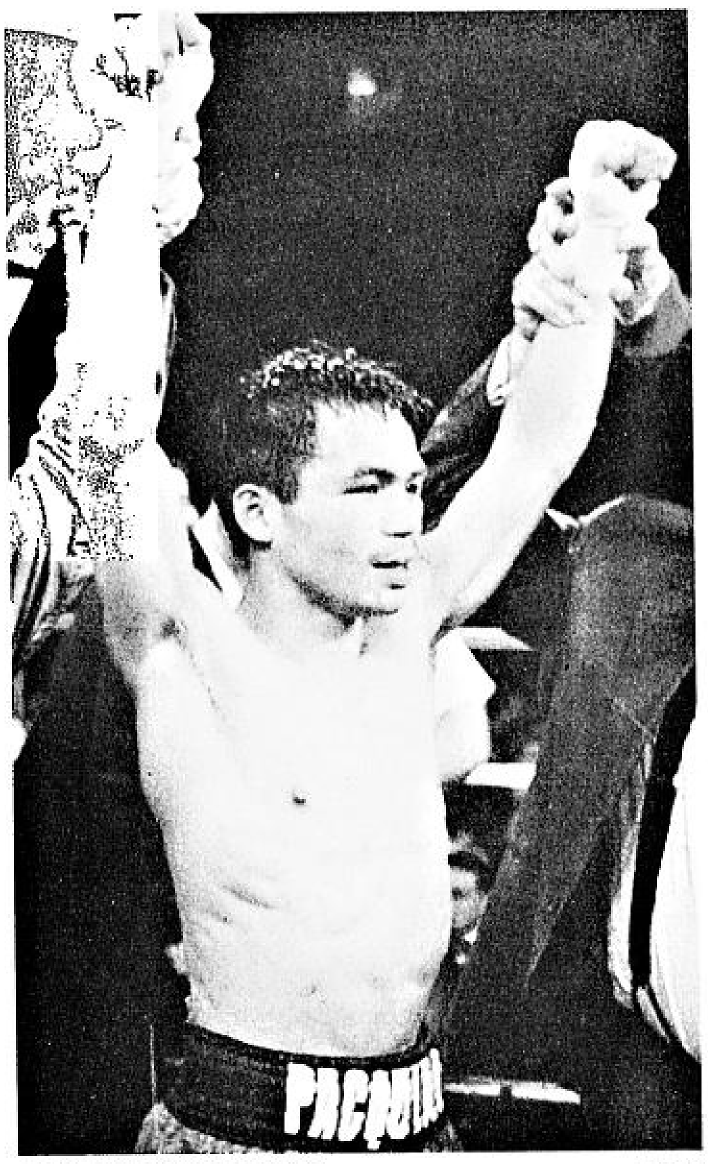
Editor **Teddyvic S. Melendres**
Assistant Editor **Edwin M. Villanueva**

SPORTS TV
Compiled by L. Manguiat

BASKETBALL: The Life-LeBron James; 7:30 a.m. (r-2:30 p.m.); ESPN—Learn more about the hype that is LeBron James.
NBA Action; 8 a.m. (r-3 p.m.); ESPN—Catch the latest NBA highlights and news in this half-hour program.
NBA-Cavs vs Nets; 8:30 p.m. (r-9:30 p.m.); ESPN; Suns vs Pistons; 9 a.m. (r-8 p.m.); Solar Sports—King James travels to the swamp in New Jersey while Phoenix hopes to shine against Detroit.
Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

PACQUIAO-BARRERA REMATCH

Salud pulls out of negotiations



PACQUIAO: Wronged fighter REUTERS

By Salven L. Lagumbay
Contributor

WORLD Boxing Council founding secretary-general Rudy Salud yesterday pulled out of the organizing group working for a Manny Pacquiao-Marco Antonio Barrera rematch, citing recent allegations by trainer Freddie Roach of financial fraud committed by some members of Team Pacquiao.

Salud, a lawyer-sportsman involved in discovering hidden Filipino boxing talents, was earlier approached by the group of American multi-millionaire Louis Pearlman, Roach and lawyer Nicholas Khan to head the group that will organize the Pacquiao-Barrera rematch, proposed to be held in the Philippines sometime late April.

"In view of suspicions surrounding the recent fights of Manny Pacquiao, we have deemed it prudent to disengage from ongoing negotiations to stage Pacquiao's next fight in Manila, which was anchored on our desire to help our country overcome its negative international image and also to give Pacquiao's countrymen a chance to see their hero in action," said Salud in an interview.

Salud, however, added he would be "willing to resume discussions provided all parties concerned first settle their differences."

Last Saturday, Salud met with a representative of Pearlman, owner of Trans Continental and such popular groups as The Backstreet Boys and N'Sync. Salud stipulated a number of stiff conditions including a late April date for a Barrera rematch, a perfected contract by the end of January including a telecast deal with HBO, an $800,000 purse for Pacquiao and an $80,000 deposit which would be forfeited to the Pacquiao camp should the Pearlman group fail to finalize all details by Jan. 31.

The group agreed with the terms and asked Salud on New Year's day to whose account the deposit be sent.

However, Salud begged off in view of the nagging controversy over the Nov. 15 "Clash of the Titans" in which Pacquiao annihilated Barrera in the 11th round.

Pacquiao was supposed to get $700,000 for the fight but his US agent, Murad Muhammad, gave him only $350,000 from which taxes and other expenses including the 10-percent training fee of Roach had to be deducted.

Roach himself has quit Team Pacquiao, charging he, too, had been cheated of $25,000 in that fight alone. He also accused Murad of being a thief who had wronged a fine young fighter.

In the light of these accusations, Salud decided to shy away from talks on Pacquiao's possible rematch with Barrera in Manila.

Rod Nazario, Pacquiao's business manager, had dealt exclusively with Murad.

Top RP sports officials invited to PSA Awards

MACAPAGAL

ARROYO

A LONG line of officials as well as friends of local sports have been invited to share a memorable evening with outstanding athletes who will be feted by the Philippine Sportswriters Association during its Annual Awards Night on Jan. 9 at the Manila Pavilion.

International Olympic Committee (IOC) representative to the Philippines Frank Elizalde, Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) chair Eric Buhain and Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) president Cito Dayrit head top officials invited to the two-hour rites honoring big sports achievers in the year just ended.

Also high on the list of guests are Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) Commissioner Noli Eala, PBA chairman Jun Cabalan, Philippine Basketball League (PBL) chief Chino Trinidad, Congressman Monico Puentevella , heads of the national sports associations and members of the corporate community helping local sports.

According to PSA president Roberto Cuevas of the Manila Standard, everything is in readiness for the affair, which is expected to be graced by no less than the First Couple, President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Mike Arroyo.

"I am glad to announce that all is set for the Awards Night. Jan. 9 will be a momentous and important evening for the athletes, sports officials and to all who love sports," said Cuevas.

Pro boxer Manny Pacquiao and bowler CJ Suarez , named co-winners of the Athlete of the Year award, will lead the honorees in the affair sponsored by Red Bull and Agfa Colors, and supported by PSC, PBA, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, San Miguel Corp. and POC.

Cuevas also said that those who will not receive their invitations before the Awards Night may pick up theirs at the reception area of the grand ballroom before the start of the show.

The Awards Night will be televised by NBN 4 with amateur basketball standout Alex Compton and Lala Roque as hosts.

The complete list of awardees:

Athletes of the Year—Manny Pacquiao, CJ Suarez

PSA President's Award—Liza del Rosario, Liza Clutario, Cecilia Yap

Antonio Siddayao Award—Bacolod Girls Softball team

Hall of Fame—Ben Arda, Celestino Tugot

Major Awardees—James Yap, Asi Taulava, Harry Tañamor, Mark Paragua, Arnel Quirimit, Dorothy Delasin, Patty Dilema, Wind Blown

Citations—Far Eastern U men's basketball team, Steve Hontiveros, Air21-FedEx, First Gentleman Foundation, Jojo Cañare, Ronald Dableo, Patafa, Philippine Bowling Congress, Jayvee Agojo, Philracom, Samsung, Glenn Aguilar, Ali Atienza, Kenneth San Andres, Rene Catalan, Allenby Jiro Ramos, Dottie Ardina, Miguel Tabuena, and Cebuana-Lhuillier

Special citations—All gold medalists, 22nd Southeast Asian Games

Posthumous awards—Pedro Adigue, Peter Alegre, Manolet Araneta, Robert Cheng, Renbe Fortaleza, Monching Lim and Percela Molina

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3 Fil-Am point guards joining pro league draft

VALENZUELA

LOPEZ

THREE Fil-Ams from California are joining the Philippine Basketball Association rookie draft slated on Jan. 16.

The three pro hopefuls, all point guards, are Kim Valenzuela, Denver Lopez and Nicholas Joseph Fasano.

This early, several coaches have expressed interest on the 22-year-old Valenzuela, a 5-foot-9 ½ playmaker, who is bent on following the footsteps of Talk 'N Text ace Jimmy Alapag, last year's PBA Rookie of the Year and an old rival in Fil-Am competitions in the West Coast.

Valenzuela, whose parents are from Tanauan, Batangas, had seen action for San Diego Dynasty which is considered among the best teams in California after stints with the Serra High School, where he once scored 41 points and dished off 10 assists in a game, and the Cuyamaca College.

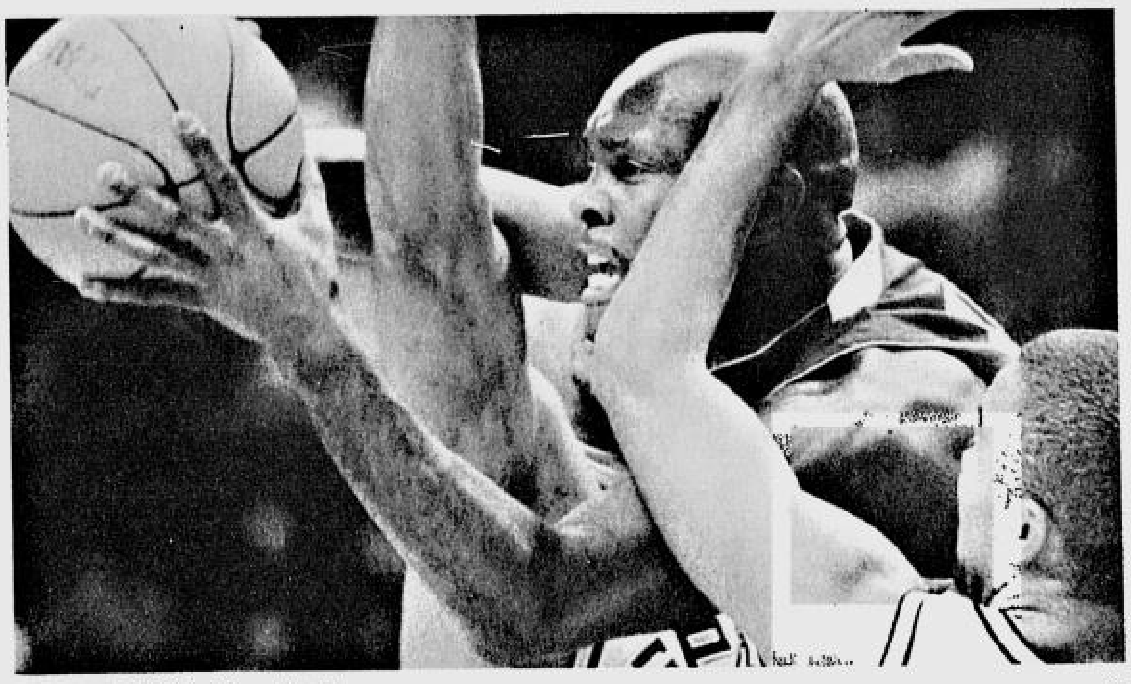
Among his awards are Eastern League Player of the Year, MVP in his junior and senior year at Serra High and MVP of the Surf and Slam Tournament.

The Caloocan-born, 23-year-old Lopez played for Nogales High School before moving to the California State University-Dominguez Hills (Division II) where he saw action for a year before playing four years for the California State University-Fullerton (Division I).

Lopez, 6-2 and agile at 183 lbs., was a multi-awarded cager in high school and was even named co-MVP with Casey Jacobsen (now an NBA player) in the Sierra League during his senior year. He was a recipient of the California State University Student Athlete Honor Roll Award for four years.

Fasano, born in Guam to a Filipina mother and an Italian father, played for Morse High School for four years, the Mesa College for a year, and the San Diego Dynasty for three years. Fasano's record includes winning an award from the San Diego Union Tribune, MVP of the Sweetwater Tournament, MVP of Morse and Defensive Player of the Year at Mesa College.

The 6-foot-3 Fasano, a defense-oriented player, averaged 18 points and seven assists per game in high school and 12 points and five assists in college and once played in the San Diego All Star Game.


PAYTON (middle): It's no big thing.
AP

Payton returning to Seattle but in Los Angeles Lakers uniform

SEATTLE—The Glove is coming back to Seattle.

Gary Payton, wearing the purple and gold of the Los Angeles Lakers, returns Friday night (Saturday morning in Manila) for the first time since the blockbuster trade last February that shipped him out after more than 12 seasons with the SuperSonics.

"It's no big thing," Payton said. "I don't care. We're going to go back to Seattle and I'm just going to play."

Payton was one of the best players to suit up for the Sonics, providing leadership and tenacious defense for more than 12 seasons. He helped the team reach the 1996 NBA Finals, where Seattle lost to Michael Jordan's Chicago Bulls.

"Any time a player is traded and they come back, it's always a strange feeling," said Sonics coach and former teammate Nate McMillan.

Payton remains Seattle's career leader in scoring (18,207 points), assists (7,384), steals (2,107), games played (999), personal fouls (2,577), minutes (36,858), triple-doubles (16), field goals made (7,292) and 3-pointers (917).

He was traded along with Desmond Mason to Milwaukee at last season's trading deadline in exchange for another All-Star, Ray Allen, plus Ronald Murray and Kevin Ollie. Payton joined the Lakers as a free agent last summer. *AP*

Trojans shine in Rose Bowl

PASADENA, California—Point made.

Top-ranked Southern California laid out its case for the national championship the best way it knew how—by dominating No. 4 Michigan with a 28-14 victory Thursday in the Rose Bowl.

Matt Leinart threw three touchdown passes and caught another to lead the Trojans past the Wolverines with a performance that should be enough to persuade voters to leave USC atop the poll.

The Associated Press' No. 1 team has never dropped in the rankings after winning its bowl, and it doesn't look as though it will happen this time, either.

While the Trojans are primed to win their first title in 25 years, they would have to share it. Voters for the USA Today/ESPN coaches' poll are obligated to crown the winner of Sunday's Sugar Bowl between No. 2 LSU and No. 3 Oklahoma, playing in the BCS championship game.

Leinart, the game's MVP, shredded the nation's sixth-ranked pass defense for 327 yards, and the Trojans (12-1) had a season-high nine sacks and even blocked a field goal by Michigan (10-3).

The Trojans were left out of the Bowl Championship Series title game because of a weaker schedule, but they felt right at home in front of a sellout crowd of 93,849.

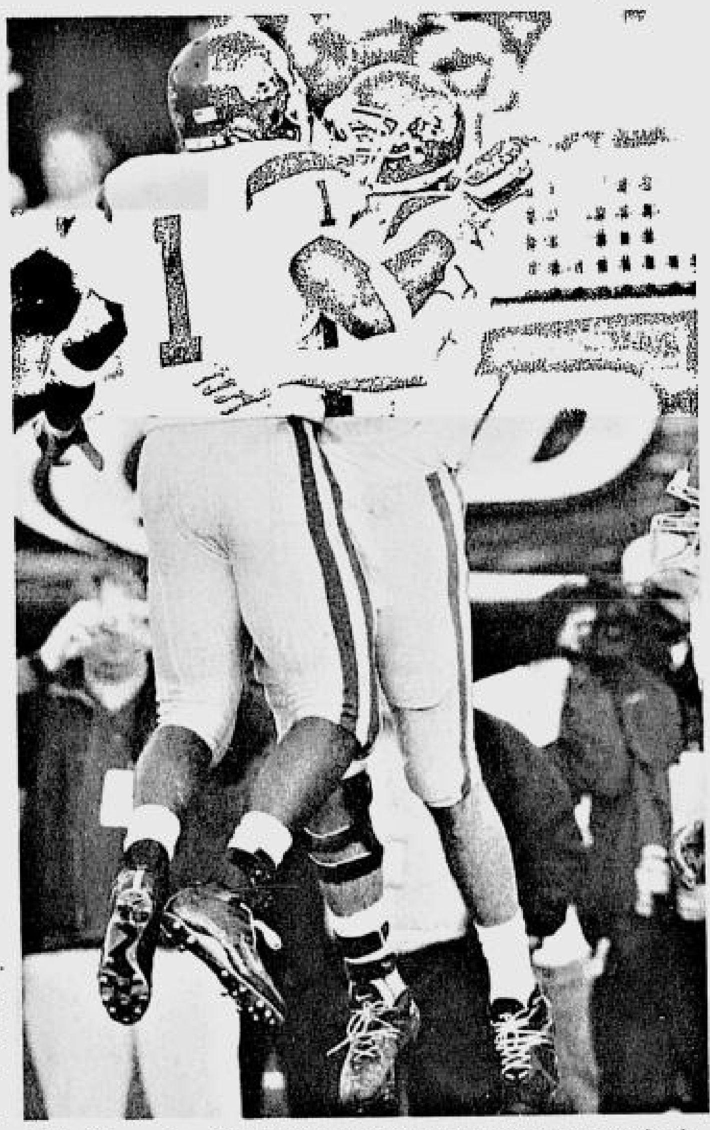
Meanwhile, in Orlando, Florida, Kregg Lumpkin redeemed himself for a stunning fumble late in regulation, scoring on a 1-yard run in overtime to give No. 11 Georgia a 34-27 victory over No. 12 Purdue in the Capital One Bowl.

In the Gator Bowl in Jacksonville Florida, Scott McBrien threw for a career-high 381 yards, helping Maryland rout West Virginia, 41-7, in a rematch of a regular-season game that was almost as lopsided.

In Tampa, Florida, Fred Russell ran for 150 yards and one touchdown, and Iowa dominated Florida, 37-17, in the Outback Bowl for its first January bowl win since the 1959 Rose Bowl.

In Miami, Jarrett Payton ran for 131 yards and Jon Peattie kicked three field goals as Miami shut out Florida State in the second half to claim a 16-14 win in the Orange Bowl.

It was No. 10 Miami's fifth consecutive victory in the heated series—its longest winning streak since 1957.


USC wide receiver Mike Williams (left) celebrates with quarterback Matt Leinart.
AFP

Barako eyes Vergel

By June Navarro

VERGEL Meneses' high-flying act for the FedEx Express seems to be over.

Known as the "Aerial Voyager," Meneses was in a swirl of trade talks over the holidays as the Express coaching staff initiated moves to ship the 6-foot-3 swingman to another team.

An INQUIRER source said Meneses, the 1995 MVP, has shown dissatisfaction over his dwindling playing time during the season-ending PBA Reinforced Conference, but that can't be helped since the Bert Lina-owned ballclub wants to utilize all its players in a game.

Red Bull Barako had shown interest in Meneses with team manager Tony Chua still negotiating with his counterpart from the Express.

FedEx has been active in the trade business with all their players on the trading block except for Renren Ritualo, John Ferriols and Wynne Arboleda.

The sophomore ballclub had already dealt 6-foot-9 slotman Yancy De Ocampo to Talk 'N Text in favor of first-round picks for this year and 2006.

FedEx Express team manager Lito Alvarez said they would possibly use the team's three first-round picks on national players Rich Alvarez, Marc Pingris, Ervin Sotto or Gary David.

The Express will pick third, fourth and ninth overall in a pool of 49 rookie aspirants.

Meanwhile, Purefoods is eyeing free agent Peter June Simon to beef up its backcourt.

Coach Ryan Gregorio said the Purefoods management had signed up swingman Rey Evangelista to another three-year pact and with the possible addition of Simon, the Hotdogs could be a force to reckon with this season.

SPORTSWATCH

Dokic skips warmup event

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—Jelena Dokic has withdrawn from next week's ASB Classic women's tennis event, one of the opening warmup tournaments for the Australian Open. Auckland tournament director Richard Palmer said Dokic, ranked 15th in the world, had personal details to sort out and could not come to New Zealand until they were resolved. "She regrets any problems, inconvenience and disappointment she may have caused," Palmer said Friday. "Her coach has stated that she would love to come to New Zealand again at some stage but now is not the right time. I'm extremely disappointed at this decision especially at such late notice." Dokic, 20; was seeded second for the Auckland tournament that begins Monday. *AP*

Las Piñas derby unfolds today

WELL-KNOWN cockers clash in the "Grand Opening 4-Cock Derby" which starts today at the fully air-conditioned Las Piñas Cockpit. More than 70 fights are scheduled in the events starting at 4 p.m. Part of the derby's proceeds will be donated to Las Piñas City's Clean and Green project, said Mayor Nene Aguilar who is hosting the event. Entries must be submitted today, from 7 a.m. to 12 noon only. Participants may call 873-1040 for other inquiries. Among the early favorites are entries of Gerry Ramos, Sen. Ramon Revilla, Bong Revilla, Roger del Rosario, Gen Arayata, councilor Henry Medina, Cito Zamesa, Johnny Elorde, Eric dela Rosa and Butchoy Olano of Pasay, Lito Orillaza, vice mayor Nestor Mercado, Jun Marasigan, Emitt San Juan, among others. Meanwhile, regular hackfights are now scheduled from Monday to Sunday at LPC, according to pit manager Alex Tobias.

KARATE POSE
Junior Chamber of the Philippines President John B. Jimenez III (5th from right) strikes a karate pose along with other officers during the 16th Junior Chamber International (JCI) Academy held in Nagano, Japan, recently. Jimenez, a karate enthusiast, attended the meet, which was also graced by delegates from India, Greece, Japan, Namibia, Peru and Bolivia. The meet was organized by the JCI and the Junior Chamber of Japan.

Boos & Best

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

THE LOUDEST boo of 2003 was the one directed at NBN 4.

The government television station outdid itself and ended up the biggest loser. It became a laughingstock and I can't think of a way for it to overcome its humiliation in the fastest manner possible.

It began when NBN 4 sought to air the PBA games starting 2003. Despite getting flak for that move and being warned strongly against pursuing it—I've said in no uncertain terms here that it's always bad for the government to compete with the private sector—NBN 4 went on to pursue the plan with the zeal of a Nazi wanting to transform the world into its private concentration camp. NBN 4 won the battle. But, alas, it ended up losing the war.

As 2003 ended, NBN 4 owed the PBA close to P165 million, take away a million or two. Last I heard, the PBA was looking for an agency to do the collecting. This, after the PBA had boasted it was forming the Council of Elders composed of, among others, former PBA chairmen and commissioners.

When I called two former PBA bigwigs to confirm the news on the so-called PBA Council of Elders, they had the same reply: No such banana.

"But it's all over the papers," I said to them.

They chorused: "Maybe you were reading the newspapers of the Republic of Tococ."

Still, when pressed for comment, they readily relented.

Said the first one: "They picked up a rock to knock onto their heads, and would next call on us to revive them from a comatose state. What are they, a bunch of jerks?"

Said the second one: "I am not a collection agency. What they need is a lawyer who knows how to write a demand letter."

The second boo for 2003 was for Jimwell Torion's deliberate foul that broke the nose of Jimmy Alapag. It was the most dastardly act in basketball in years, one that was career-threatening on the part of Alapag. Torion was lucky because Alapag did not sue him for serious physical injuries.

The third boo was for Noli Eala's season-long consistency in preparing a menu for disaster for the PBA. His three conferences in 2003 were a surefire formula of how not to hold a PBA season. As a result, Eala gave the league its most hated prize in the league's 28 years of existence: The All-Time Kalabasa Award for the lowest crowd attendance ever.

The best of the year, of course, was the world bowling crown snatched in stunning fashion by CJ Suarez, whose victory almost equaled in impact countryman Steve Hontiveros' selection as world bowling federation president.

The next best of the year, actually almost a co-equal in rank to CJ's triumph, was Manny Pacquiao's 11th round knockout of the legendary Marco Antonio Barrera of Mexico. The victory suddenly aligned Pacquiao with the world's greatest fighters and planted his name in the lips of every boxing buff in the universe.

And the third and last best, but definitely not the least, was the eight gold medals won by GTK's Army in the Vietnam SEA Games. It assured Eric Buhain's bold forecast of the 40-plus gold medals to be pocketed in the meet but, more importantly, it allowed—if that's any consolation at all—the Philippines to surpass Malaysia for the fourth overall spot. All this on top of the fact that the eight golds won made Patafa the winningest NSA for the second straight edition of the biennial event.

Again, peace to all in the new year!

***

FASTBREAK. I've heard the good news from my neighbor, Ambassador Boy del Rosario of Plaridel, Bulacan. Boy, whose last assignment was India, told me Tony Modena, the former newspaperman, will shortly become our ambassador to Israel. Tony is a friend from way back, who once treated our amateur boxers to a sumptuous dinner in Paris when he was still posted in France as a consul general. Despite a tight schedule, and learning of the boxers' arrival just as dusk was setting in, Tony wasted no time preparing *mongo*, *adobo* and steaming white rice for the battle-weary boxers. The embassy driver turned up in our hotel in driving rain with the goodies. The dinner turned out to be the boxers' best meal for the trip. May your tribe increase, Tony.

E-mail: pr_pep@inquirer.com.ph
aespinosa@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Samsung launches BMW promo

SAMSUNG Electronics Philippines Inc has announced its latest DigitAllmatch promo where customers who purchased any of the following Samsung mobile phone models T100, T200, T400, T500, S200, S300, V200 and the upcoming models X400, E700 and P400 is entitled to a free BMW keychain and a chance to win a brand new BMW 318i. Promo period is ongoing until Feb. 1.

Samsung Electronics Philippines vice-president for sales and marketing Martin Maengdal Bae said the Samsung DigitAllmatch promo is the company's way of thanking its customers for supporting the Samsung brand. "Many consider the Samsung mobile phone as the ultimate mobile phone because of its style and performance just as the BMW is considered the ultimate driving machine. This is our way of enabling our customers to get a chance to enjoy the best of both worlds," Bae said.

Customers need to fill-up the raffle section of the Samsung warranty card found in the box with complete name, address and affix signature and drop at designated drop boxes located at any First Asia Mobile Inc dealer. Deadline of dropping of entries is on Jan. 25 at 5p.m.

The raffle draw will be on Feb 1, 3 p.m. at the Samsung Electronics Philippines Corp head office located at the Bonaventure Plaza Ortigas Avenue, Greenhills, San Juan. Announcement and notification of the winner will be done in the Philippine Daily Inquirer and the Philippine Star and through registered notification letter from Samsung Electronics Philippines Corp. For more information, customers may visit the nearest First Asia Mobile Inc dealer.

OPERATION DIABETES

The national board of the Association of Municipal Health Officers of the Philippines (Amhop) met recently with Amhop-Cebu chapter to discuss ways to further strengthen 'Operation Diabetes', a joint Amhop-Herbcare Corp program that aims to curb diabetes incidence in the country. The meeting was led by Dr. Guia Abad, Amhop president; Dr. Fe Lynn Tampon, Amhop-Cebu president; and Lito Abelarde, president of Herbcare, maker of Charantia Ampalaya Food Supplements.

IMDM, WISDOM, IGSC SIGN AGREEMENT

The International Movement of Development Managers (IMDM), in partnership with the Wisdom group and the Integrated Greenearth Systems Corp (IGSC) recently organized a three-day multi-sectoral leadership conference with the theme: 'Building of Leaders and Organizations Through Good Governance' last Dec. 3 at the AIM Conference Center in Makati City. Shown during the partnership signing agreement are (from left): Henry Tenedero, Wisdom president; Coratec Jimenez, IMDM president; and Rommel Cortez, IGSC president.

Colliers International Phils Inc.
Malayan Insurance Company Inc.
September 30, 20
Signi
Exclu
n Plaz

MALAYAN APPOINTS COLLIERS AS EXCLUSIVE MARKETING MANAGER

Malayan Insurance Company Inc (Mico), the developer of the Malayan Plaza project located along ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City, has appointed Colliers International Phils Inc to be its sole exclusive marketing managers for the newly constructed building. The Malayan Plaza, formerly known as the ASB-Malayan Tower, is a 32-storey residential condominium building. Present during the contract signing were (seated from left): Marissa Benitez, director - residential and leasing division, Colliers International Phils Inc; Nigel Lucas, managing director, Colliers International Phils Inc; William Cua, executive vice president, Malayan Insurance Company Inc; Gemma Cheng, vice president, Malayan Insurance Company Inc; (standing from left) Pia Franco, marketing manager, Malayan Plaza and AJ Zarate, project manager, Malayan Insurance Company Inc.

Be a Big Spender, Big Winner with Citibank

CITIBANK'S Big Spender, Big Winner promotion is now down to its final two-week draw, so collect your Citibank credit card receipts and join in for this last chance to win big, big prizes.

This promotion is open to all Citibank credit cardholders with a minimum P1,000 purchase, in single or accumulated receipts, using their Citibank credit card at all Robinsons Malls.

Only charged purchases starting Nov. 22, 2003 to Jan. 18, and made at any merchant establishments within Robinsons Mall, Robinsons Department Store, Robinsons Supermarket, Handyman, Big R Supercenter and R. Abensons can join the promotion.

There are two ways to join and win. One, present your valid receipts at Citibank Redemption Booths located at select Robinsons Malls and play the Pick-a-Prize game. You'll get to pick a ball with a number that corresponds to an instant Citibank gift item, such as a travel bag, umbrella, mouse pads, pens, mini Beetle model cars, Gold's Gym Pass, and other items.

Two, you can stand to win top-of-the-line home theater systems, large flat-screen TVs, and other fabulous appliances in the Top Spender Game.

Simply pool all your valid receipts and submit these to the Citibank Redemption Booths. You will be asked to fill up the Top Bi-Weekly Spender Form with your name, address, contact number and other information. Citibank has scheduled four Bi-Weekly periods where cardholders can compete to be the biggest spender. Enter your purchases in the last drawing period of Jan. 5 to 18 and if your entries are adjudged to have the highest purchase amount, you automatically win any of these top prizes.

This promotion is open to all current cardholders of Citibank Silver and Gold Visa and MasterCard, Shell-Citibank MasterCard, Citibank Cathay Pacific Visa, Citibank Clear Card and Citibank Visa Platinum. For more details, call CitiPhone at 995-9999 or visit www.citibank.com.ph.

Luxury and value in one package

WITH suites offering accommodations for from four up to eight persons, the Oakwood Premier Ayala Center's Yuletide promotions are among the most popular in-city vacation packages for local residents.

Up to Jan. 4, one-, two-and three-bedroom suites at the Oakwood Premier will be offered to local residents at significant value deals which are approximately 70 percent off published prices. A one-bedroom can easily accommodate four persons; a two bedroom, six persons; a three-bedroom, eight persons. Moreover, each Oakwood Premier unit has a living room, dining room, full kitchen as well as entertainment center and laundry facilities.

With these amenities, a family has the option of dining in the unit or in any of the myriad restaurants of the Ayala Center including the Greenbelt complex, which is easily accessible to Oakwood via the Makati elevated walkway system. A family can also choose to view a film in the comfort of the suite or in any of the 15 theaters just a pleasant walk away.

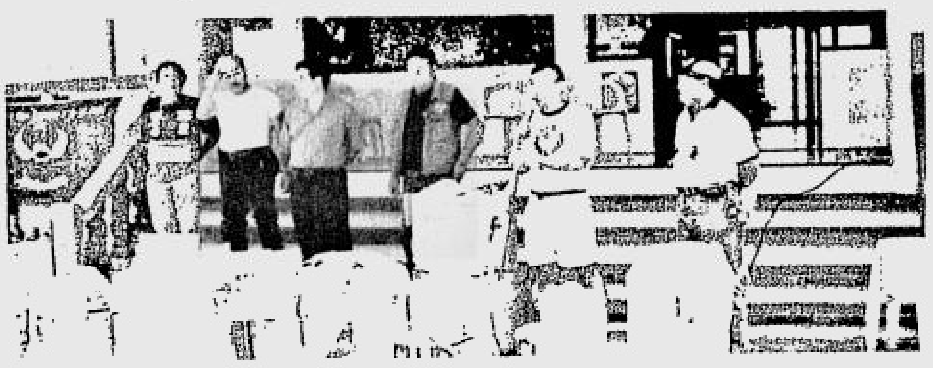
In addition, a booking at the Oakwood Premier Ayala Center also allows them the use of the swimming pool, tennis courts, gym, and steam rooms and to attend aerobics sessions. They likewise have the option to shop in over 900 stores of the Ayala Center, to stroll in any of its parks, or to take in the cultural offerings of the Ayala Museum and the Filipinas Heritage Library.

A stay at the suites comes with complimentary buffet breakfast for two up to six persons. With a choice of up to 15 fruits in season, 10 varieties of bread, 9 cereals, 10 hot dishes, cold cuts and more, the Oakwood Breakfast offers value, variety and freshness.

According to Al Legaspi, Oakwood senior executive, "Among frequent travelers, Oakwood Premier is known for its superior values as well as luxury accommodations." Oakwood's suites are among the best appointed among Makati establishments.

Observes Legaspi: "Luxury and value do not usually come in one package." The fact that they do at Oakwood is perhaps the reason why the establishment's local residents' package is one of the most successful in Makati.

Oakwood's reservations department can be called at 729-8888 for inquiries or bookings.



BMW MOTORCYCLE CLUB DONATES TO DAGUPAN CITY

The BMW Motorcycle Club of the Philippines recently rode to Dagupan City to distribute canned goods and other relief items to flood victims and impoverished families. The motorcycle group's humanitarian project coincided with the anniversary celebration of the Law Enforcers Riders Association of the Philippines (Lerap) and the Big Bike Riders of Dagupan (Brod). Tour events of the BMW Motorcycle Club are supported in part by Autohaus BMW, the only exclusive authorized BMW dealer that offers the BMW Motorrad product line. For this project, Autohaus BMW provided a service mobile and technical crew, not only to ensure the safety of the riders, but also to transport the relief goods. Photo shows BMW Motorcycle Club member Francis Rivera addressing the families that received the aid in Dagupan City.

SWERTENG
SHOPPER
ORACION
100,000

ISETANN SUPERMARKET AWARDS PROMO WINNER

Rodeza Oracion (center) received her P100,000 prize money for winning the 2nd major raffle draw of 'Swerteng Shopper sa Isetann' supermarket promo last November. The on-going promo, which was launched early this year, will run until February 2004. This will be capped by a grand draw where one million pesos will be given away to a lucky Isetann shopper. Also in the picture are (from left) DTI representative Ellen Gonao and Isetann supermarket employees Melanie Inovero, Michael Arenos and Philip Rosal.

Product FILES

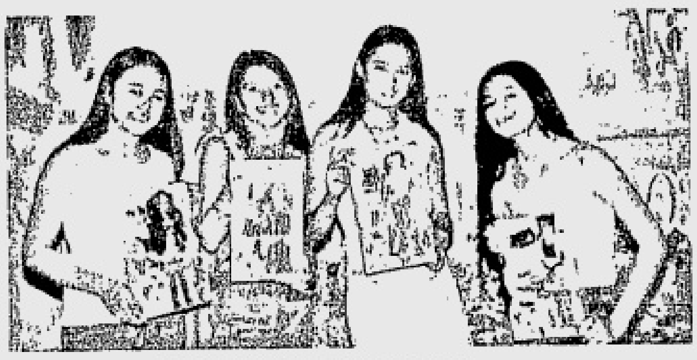
Asus L5: the paramount of performance

SEE work and play in a different light with Asus L5's Ace View - a cutting edge technology that allows you to achieve sharper and richer images and wide viewing angle. Powered by Pentium 4 processor at 2.66 GHz, Asus L5 also has 256 up to 1024 MB DDR, 40 BG hard disk drive, and 64 MB dedicated Video/ATI Mobility Radeon 9000, which further push the capability of the notebook PC. The 1.44 floppy disk drive and DVD-ROM/Combo drive are built right in, plus the 10/100/1000 Gigabit LAN, 5 USB ports, 3 in 1 card reader, and 1394 Firewire port enhance your multimedia life. You can choose from the Windows XP, Windows XP Pro and Windows 2000 operating systems. Asus L5 is a prize catch at P99,900.

There's a new 'crunch' at Jollibee

GET ready to enjoy your day because Jollibee is giving you and your friends a whole lot more fun especially now that it offers new exciting flavors of your Jolly Twirl Crunch: refreshing orange and mouth-watering caramel. The tangy flavor of orange is great for a teen's zesty personality. A crunchy bite of the refreshing Orange Jolly Twirl Crunch flavor is enough to soothe your desire for a cool snack. Add to this the rich buttery flavor of the Caramel Jolly Twirl Crunch that will tempt you to indulge a sweet dessert treat. With these new thrilling Jolly Twirl Crunch flavors, you can call your friends for an afternoon delight because these fun products are not only your extraordinary desserts but they are also pleasurable snacks.

Jolly Twirl Crunch
Caramel
Orange
P10 each

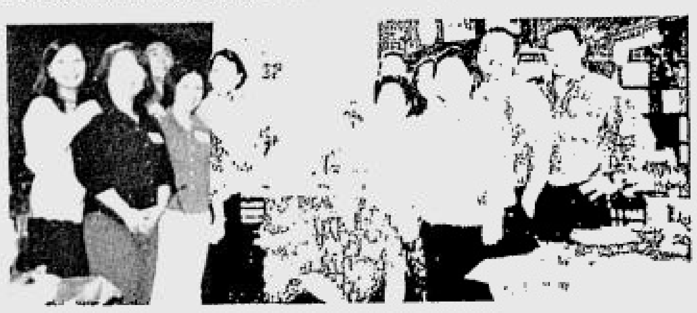


THE NEW GIRLS ON THE CITY SCENE

What's new on the city scene? It's 'My Scene'. These highly fashionable dolls from Mattel come with a full wardrobe so you can dress up Madison, Barbie or Chelsea and Nolee just like you. What's more is that 'My Scene' dolls come with its own accessories. Clothes, shoes, bags and even a cellular phone. These dolls let your little girl stir up her imagination and also learn to be mature. These lovely and sassy 'My Scene' girls have been hopping around the city showing little girls what it takes to be on the scene. Photo shows the 'My Scene' girls raving of their modeling prowess at SM North Edsa last Oct. 12. So come on, the next time someone asks you what's new on the scene, tell them it's 'My Scene', the newest girls on the city scene. My Scene dolls are exclusively distributed by Richwell Trading Corp #25 Richwell Bldg, Quezon Ave, Quezon City. Email mktg@richwell.net.

ROTARY CLUB OF BATASAN HILLS, QC DONATES TO BHES

The Rotary Club of Batasan Hills, Quezon City has donated several boxes of books and personal computers to Batasan Hills Elementary School recently. Shown in the turnover ceremony are the pupils of BHES with assistant principal Rosemarie Salvador, receiving the personal computer from architect Jun Sacayan, RCBH director for new generation service and Rene Trinidad, president of RCBH.



MAMA SITA'S NEW LOGO LAUNCHED

Mama Sita's mixes and sauces unveiled its new logo in a well-attended luncheon party held at Chateau 1771's Side Bar Café in Ortigas Center recently. The event drew enthusiastic support and participation by Mama Sita's buyers, suppliers, distributors and dealers. Many of the guests were members of the print and broadcast media as well as representatives from the Department of Trade and Industry and other government agencies. The buffet table was laden with dishes cooked using Mama Sita's products. The new logo is designed to provide Mama Sita's products with a more vibrant and contemporary look. The transformation also connotes a refocusing of Mama Sita's foothold on the local market and reaffirms the company's mission to produce quality products at competitive prices. Shown are the Mama Sita's staff during the event.

People, Events & Products

E-mail: pr_pep@inquirer.com.ph
aespinosa@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Aries Espinosa**

RP-UK inaugurates center of excellence for sustainable energy

THE WORLD Energy Council (WEC) through the British Energy Association (WEC UK Member Committee) has forged a partnership with the UK Department of Trade and Industry at the last World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg held in 2002 to establish as Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Energy (CESE) in the Philippines. The Energy Council Philippines (ECP) will host the CESE -it is also the WEC Philippine Member Committee - and supported by the Department of Energy (DOE). The CESE was formally launched in Manila on Dec. 4, 2003 attended by officials from both the Philippines and the United Kingdom. Brian Wilson, former UK Energy Minister and now Special Envoy for the UK DTI was joined by DOE Secretary Vicente Perez Jr during the launch together with Ambassador Paul Dimond, Peter Garrucho Jr OBE, chair of the ECP, Antonio Del Rosario, chair of the WEC, Ian Thomas, director of Amec, Ray Burley, power sector unit head, UK Trade & Investment, and Dr Barry Holmes, Renewable Energy Trade Promoter, UKDTI.

The CESE in Manila is the first WEC Centre of Excellence in the Asia-Pacific region, and provides an example of the action and results oriented approach to achieving the goals of energy sustainability: accessibility, availability and acceptability. The center's concept was developed along the partnerships/initiatives agreed at the WSSD and will demonstrate how a close and business-led partnership on the ground can provide benefits to the partners and the community at large. They will promote and support sustainable energy concepts and technologies, power sector reform and management techniques, to work with the DOE and LGUs to develop new projects and Philippine industry representatives to identify and develop opportunities to deploy sustainable energy technologies and techniques. Activities will commence in early 2004, focusing on catalogue of best practices, renewable energy, energy efficiency in production and end-use and cleaner coal technologies. For more information, call the CESE, 11th floor of Phinma Plaza, 39 Plaza Drive, Rockwell City, Makati or through the web at www.cesenet.org

LULI ARROYO VISITS PLDT INNOLAB

Presidential daughter and Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development (Fit-Ed) director for operations, Luli Arroyo, recently visited PLDT's Innovation Laboratory (Innolab) at the 5th floor, Innovation Laboratory and Telecoms Education Center of PLDT, Dansalan, Mandaluyong City. PLDT's Innolab is the breeding ground of various PLDT business solutions. PLDT assistant vice president for corporate product research and development category Joselito Limjap (second from right), demonstrates the network capabilities of the Innolab. Looking on are (from left) PLDT data services installation and maintenance head Gene de Guzman, project associate of Digital Philippines Edwin Soriano, PLDT senior relationship manager Ronnie Mendoza, PLDT access business head Luis Alde and PLDT senior vice president for corporate business group Ernesto Alberto.

ARD
Call Ca
Enchanted

PLDT RENEWS PARTNERSHIP WITH ENCHANTED KINGDOM

PLDT and Enchanted Kingdom recently signed a renewed partnership for the special edition Enchanted Kingdom Touch Card and promotion tie-up. Shown during the singing are (seated, from left) Raul S. Alvarez, AVP PLDT retail marketing , services and Pam Davilla, AVP Enchanted Kingdom sales and marketing. Also shown are (standing, from left) Gigi Astudillo, AVP, PLDT sales; Jeng Dela Torre, manager EK advertising, promotion and publicity; Kristine Ignacio, senior product manager, PLDT marketing cards group; Wizard, Princess Victoria and Lani Manabat, assistant product manager, PLDT marketing cards group.

MCJIM LEATHER SIGNS UP EDU MANZANO AS IMAGE MODEL

Leading brand of leather products McJim has chosen versatile actor and TV personality Edu Manzano as image model. McJim executives believe that Edu embodies the brand's product qualities and personality—classic, elegant, durable and stylish. Shown are Edu Manzano and Mary Cham, president of Three Two Eight Industries (second and third from right, respectively) during the contract signing. Also shown are Jeremy Cham, McJim marketing manager and Michelle Lim, president of HOLL Advertising and Promotions Inc. Available in leading department stores nationwide, McJim leather products include belts, wallets, bags, cellphone cases, key holders and a variety of quality leather accessories. McJim is available in leading department stores nationwide.

Help a phone call away for Ford Edsa clients

HELP is only a phone call away 24 hours a day for emergency situations of Ford Edsa clients.

All new vehicles purchased at Ford EDSA from Jan 1, 2002 onwards automatically get a free Basic Emergency Roadside Assistance (ERA) 12 months coverage. Ford Edsa is the first authorized Ford dealer in the country and recipient of the prestigious President's Circle Award. It is located at 29 Edsa Greenhills, San Juan City. Last Nov. 28, Ford Edsa's Quality Care Service Center at 65 Connecticut Street, Northeast Greenhills, San Juan City held its grand opening and blessing.

Those covered by the Basic ERA can call 1-800-8-FORDHLP or 1-800-FORD911 from anywhere in the Philippines. Simply provide the ERA telephone service staff with certain information like name, precise location of vehicle, description of the vehicle (model/color), plate number, description of the problem, and contact number.

The Basic ERA covers most situations and plan owners are entitled up to three availments during the period of enrollment. The limit does not apply in the case of accidents.

Among the services covered under the Basic ERA are changing flat tire, jump-starting flat battery or arranging battery replacement, providing enough fuel to travel to the nearest refueling facility, towing, relaying urgent messages to family, friends or business associates likely to be affected or concerned by the disruption or delay, making available the addresses and telephone numbers of hospitals and medical facilities, arranging for alternate means of transportation should vehicle be immobilized due to repair at the workshop, and arrangement for medical evacuation.

Through the Basic ERA, fully equipped and Ford recognized service providers are ready to bedispatched should emergency situations require assistance at the roadside.

Loida Lewis lauds PLRA program

LAWYER Loida Nicolas Lewis, formerly of Sorsogon Province and now one of the most successful and richest Filipina-Americans in the United States, has endorsed the Philippine Leisure and Retirement (PLRA) special visa programs after applying and obtaining, in just five days, her own Special Retiree Resident Visa (SRRV)-called the IR2B2 (Investor and Retiree Resident Balikbayan Visa).

In one simple stroke, former Filipinos can now enjoy multiple entry visa to avail themselves of the "value for money" benefits during their visit to the Philippines, while helping spur the growth of the Philippines' economy, according to Lewis.

After the untimely death of her husband, Lewis has continued the successful management of her family's multimillion-dollar business empire that extends from America to Europe.

Lewis is the chair of the National Federation of Filipino American Association (NaFFAA), which joined other balikbayans worldwide in attending the 2nd Global Filipino Networking Convention. This homecoming was held Dec. 15 to 18 at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) in Pasay City as a joint program of both the government and private sectors to encourage former Filipinos to help in the country's nation-building.

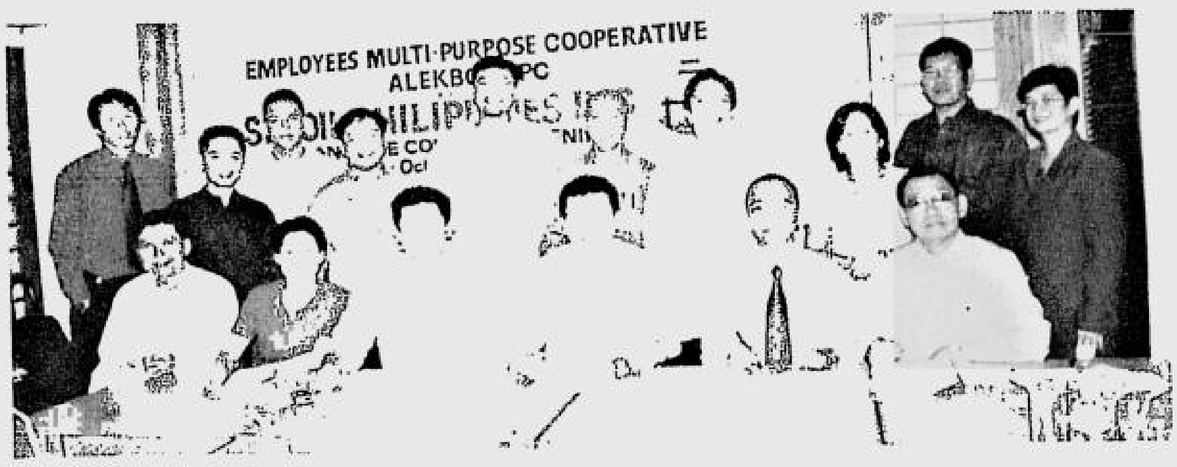
Meanwhile, Gov. J. Antonio C. Leviste, chair of the PLRA board of trustees, personally welcomed Lewis, who is also a personal friend of his wife Sen. Loren Legarda-Leviste, into the PLRA family.

IR2B2 holders (who are former Filipinos) are entitled to various perks and privileges that include, among others: 1) permanent non-immigrant status with multiple-entry privilege visa to the Philippines; 2) opportunity to bring in the spouse and dependent/s into the visa program, provided the dependent is below 21 years of age; 3) assistance by a battery of PLRA lawyers for their legal needs; 4) free access to a host of PLRA accredited service providers such as medical and allied services (like doctors, nurses, physical therapists, caregivers) and utility services (towing services and home assistance services).

ProductFILES

GSM Inc offers Gran Matador Brandy

GINEBRA San Miguel Inc seeks to satisfy a growing number of brandy drinkers with Gran Matador Brandy—a premium blend of high-quality alcohol and choice flavors. Carefully mixed with real brandy concentrate from Spain processed through the grand Solera tradition that gives Gran Matador Brandy the rich and distinct aroma and smoothness comparable with imported brands. Available in 375-ml and soon to be available in 700-ml bottles, Gran Matador Brandy is affordably priced, making it accessible to more Filipino brandy drinkers. Since its pipelining in June, market response to Gran Matador Brandy has been encouraging.



SEAOIL SIGNS CONTRACT WITH ABBOTT

Seaoil Philippines Inc recently signed a contract signing with Abbott Laboratories (Philippines) Employees' Multi-Purpose Cooperative (ALEKBC-MPC) for the management and operation of its Pasig Boulevard Gas Station. Main signatories to this petroleum dealership agreement were Francis Glen Yu, president of Seaoil Philippines Inc (4th from left) and Aurelio E. Ines, chair, ALEKBC-MPC (5th from left). Also present during the contract signing were Mark Yu, vice president, Jacqueline Yu, IT manager and business development managers of Seaoil Philippines Inc as well as the officers and directors of ALEKBC-MPC.

ADIDAS OPENS 1ST 'BRAND STORE' IN LIPA, BATANGAS

The latest in Adidas' wide array of sports, fashion, leisure wear, footwear and accessories is now within reach of Batanguenos as Adidas Philippines opened its first ever 'brand store' in Batangas at the Robinsons Place, Lipa, Batangas. Shown (from left) are Adidas Philippines general manager for sales Bing Paras and marketing director Angelica Suiza, franchise owner When Dagondon with special guests TV and movie personality Angel Aquino and Lipa, Batangas Vice Mayor Mangguera.

Bits Clips

RAHS alumni reunion

RAMON Avancena High School calls on all graduates and faculty to attend the reunion of graduates and faculty on Jan. 10, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the RAHS Campus. For more details, call 749-7666 (Aileen Aguinaldo), 733-9025 (Naura) or 0920-4288708.

Yacat Family reunion

ALL YACAT Family members are invited to join the forthcoming 24th Yacat Family reunion on Jan. 11 to be held in Pamaldan, Cabanatuan City. For particulars, call Rey I. Yacat at 0918-5772470 or Conrado Y. de Leon at 0919-8609932.

'Money Back X 10'

THE WORLD'S first credit card, Diners Club, recently launched its Money Back X 10 Raffle Promo, giving its cardholders the opportunity to win back money charged to their credit cards, times ten. Every month up to Feb. 20, 18 lucky cardholders who shop with their Diners Club credit cards have the chance to win in a weekly draw that entitles them to win back 10 times what they charged to their credit cards, up to a maximum of P50,000. On March 10, up to P1 million will be up for grabs in the grand draw.What's unique is that merchant partners also get to join the promo. They instantly win P10,000 every time a winning transaction is made at their establishment. If you're not yet a Diners Club cardholder, call the 24-hour Club Phone at 88-791-88.

WFUMB, PSUCMI program

THE WORLD Federation of Ultrasound in Medicine and Biology (WFUMB), has chosen the Philippines as the site of its Training for the Trainers Program-Asian Education Project in cooperation with the Philippine Society of Ultrasound in Clinical Medicine Inc (PSUCMI). This will be held from Jan. 21 to 23 at the Philippine Children's Medical Center. The three-day course is only limited to 30 selected participants from different specialties nationwide. The 2nd Annual Convention of the Philippine Society of Ultrasound in Clinical Medicine Inc (PSUCMI) will follow on Jan. 24 and 25 at the Philippine Children's Medical Center Conference Room with the theme "Ultrasound for the Clinicians-Emergencies and Updates". It will be a gathering of foreign and local participants from different specialties with various skills and knowledge in ultrasound.

National sales rally set

START 2004 with a bang. Don't miss the National Sales Rally, an event held once every 5 years. This is the gathering of sales people from different companies to "recharge their batteries", enhance their motivation and selling skills to jump-start the new year. The session speakers are James Valentine, international trainer and author, Francis Kong, founder of Business Matters and radio host of "Business Matters" (DZFE), Rene Espinosa, a sought-after motivational speaker and sales trainer, and Chinkee Tan, considered the "networking guru of the Philippines." The keynote speaker is Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay. The sales congress is slated on Jan. 27, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Traders Hotel. The host for this event is Porter and Miles Inc, premier training company on business, management, marketing, sales and human resource development. Call Mercy at 638-7719/20.

SM CINEMA

SM Dial-A-Movie 833-9999

NOW SHOWING

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
9285452

1	MANO PO 2
2	BRIDAL SHOWER
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	CAPTAIN BARBELL
5	MALIKMATA
6	CRYING LADIES
7	GAGAMBOY
8	FILIPINAS

SM CITY CEBU
2313976

1	BRIDAL SHOWER
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	GAGAMBOY
4	FILIPINAS
5	CRYING LADIES
6	MANO PO 2
7	MALIKMATA
8	CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY BACOOR
4173868

1	BRIDAL SHOWER
2	FILIPINAS
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	MANO PO 2
5	CAPTAIN BARBELL
6	MALIKMATA
7	GAGAMBOY
8	CRYING LADIES

SM CITY PAMPANGA
7126615

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	BRIDAL SHOWER
4	GAGAMBOY
5	MALIKMATA
6	CRYING LADIES

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT
8294975

1	CRYING LADIES
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	MALIKMATA
4	BRIDAL SHOWER

SM BICUTAN
7763955

1	GAGAMBOY
2	MALIKMATA
3	MANO PO 2
4	CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY MARILAO

1	MALIKMATA
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	GAGAMBOY

SM STA. MESA
7149532 • 7161416

1	MANO PO 2
2	CRYING LADIES
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	BRIDAL SHOWER
5	FANTASTIC MAN
6	GAGAMBOY
7	MALIKMATA
8	BRIDAL SHOWER
9	FILIPINAS
10	GAGAMBOY

SM SOUTHMALL
8065000

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	FILIPINAS
3	CRYING LADIES
4	CAPTAIN BARBELL
5	GAGAMBOY
6	BNDAL SHOWER
7	MALIKMATA
8	FANTASTIC MAN
9	CAPTAIN BARBELL
10	MANO PO 2

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
9359749

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	GAGAMBOY
3	CRYING LADIES
4	BRIDAL SHOWER
5	CAPTAIN BARBELL
6	FANTASTIC MAN
7	MANO PO 2
8	FANTASTIC MAN
9	GAGAMBOY
10	MALIKMAFA
11	BRIDAL SHOWER
12	FILIPINAS

SM CITY DAVAO
2976938

1	MANO PO 2
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	FILIPINAS
5	BRIDAL SHOWER
6	CRYING LADIES

SM CITY LUCENA
(042) 7108977-80

1	CAPTAIN BARBELL
2	GAGAMBOY
3	CRYING LADIES
4	GAGAMBOY

SM MEGAMALL
6331801 • 6329401

1	MANO PO 2
	RESERVE-A-SEAT dial 6336886
2	CRYING LADIES
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	MANO PO 2
5	BRIDAL SHOWER
6	GAGAMBOY
7	BRIDAL SHOWER
8	CRYING LADIES
9	MALIKMATA
10	FANTASTIC MAN
11	GAGAMBOY
12	FILIPINAS

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN
2514302

1	CAPTAIN BARBELL
2	CRYING LADIES
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	BRIDAL SHOWER

SM CITY ILOILO
3208432

1	MALIKMATA
2	RESERVED
3	BRIDAL SHOWER
4	GAGAMBOY
5	CRYING LADIES
6	MANO PO 2
7	RESERVED
8	CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY MANILA
5239249

1	BRIDAL SHOWER
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	GAGAMBOY
4	MANO PO 2
5	MALIKMATA
6	CRYING LADIES
7	BRIDAL SHOWER
8	FILIPINAS
9	CAPTAIN BARBELL
10	GAGAMBOY
11	CRYING LADIES
12	MALIKMATA

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
(088) 8593584

1	BRIDAL SHOWER
2	CRYING LADIES
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	MANO PO 2

SM CITY BAGUIO
(074) 4464505

1	MANO PO 2
2	MALIKMATA
3	CRYING LADIES
4	GAGAMBOY

THE PODIUM CINEMA

18 ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City • 638 9781 - 85

1	CRYING LADIES 12:20 FS/12:50 MF/3:15/5:40/8:05/10:00 LFS/10:30 LMF/12:25 END
2	MANO PO 2 11:20 FS/11:50 MF/2:30/5:10/7:50/10:05 LFS/10:30 LMF/12:45 END

For Seat Reservation, call 632 6975 • LATE NIGHT SCREENING DURING FRIDAYS AND SATURDAYS

Matinee P100.00 - Screening until 5pm • Monday thru Friday • Regular P120.00 • After 5pm • Saturday • Sunday • Holidays (Reserved Seating)

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DIAL-A-MOVIE FOR ALL BRANCHES 635-5555

Galleria 632- 9115- 16 687-0593

THX /All Digital

1	CRYING LADIES	11:10, 1:45, 4:20, 6:55, 9:30 THX
2	MANO PO 2	11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL	11:30, 2:05, 4:40, 7:15, 9:50
4	FANTASTIC MAN	10:35, 12:50, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:50
5	BRIDAL SHOWER	11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50
6	GAGAMBOY	10:20, 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00
7	HOMECOMING	12:20, 2:30, 4:40, 6:50, 9:00
8	MALIKMATA	12:30, 2:45, 5:00, 7:15, 9:30
9	FILIPINAS	12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00
10	CRYING LADIES	2:15, 4:50, 7:25, 10:00

MATINEE PRICE: P100 THX cinema / P75 tlevel cinemas Mon.- Fri. / 10am- 4pm (EXCEPT HOLIDAYS)

Ermita 526-7185 536-7809 to 12

1 MANO PO 2 - 11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 10:00
2 FANTASTIC MAN - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
3 FILIPINAS - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
4 BRIDAL SHOWER - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
5 CAPTAIN BARBEL - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
6 GAGAMBOY - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
7 CRYING LADIES - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00

Metro East 682-8193/99 682-8280
Marcos hway

1	MALIKMATA
2	BRIDAL SHOWER
3	MANO PO 2
4	FILIPINAS
5	CRYING LADIES
6	CAPTAIN BARBELL
7	FANTASTIC MAN
8	GAGAMBOY

Novaliches 935-3229 / 31

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	FILIPINAS
3	MALIKMATA
4	CRYING LADIES
5	CAPTAIN BARBELL
6	MANO PO 2
7	BRIDAL SHOWER
8	GAGAMBOY

Cainta
Brgy. Sto Domingo Ortigas Extension

1	BRIDAL SHOWER
2	CRYING LADIES
3	GAGAMBOY
4	FANTASTIC MAN

Malabon 288-0985/2575

1	CRYING LADIES
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	GAGAMBOY
4	BRIDAL SHOWER

Sta. Rosa (049)837-0907		Lipa, Batangas (043)757-3664/312-5870
FANTASTIC MAN	1	MANO PO 2
FILIPINAS	2	FILIPINAS
MALIKMATA	3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
GAGAMBOY	4	MALIKMATA
CAPTAIN BARBELL	5	CRYING LADIES

Dasmariñas		Imus (046)471-8188 / 875-5858
GAGAMBOY	1	FANTASTIC MAN
CRYING LADIES	2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
FANTASTIC MAN	3	CRYING LADIES
CAPTAIN BARBELL	4	BRIDAL SHOWER
MALIKMATA	5	FILIPINAS
	6	GAGAMBOY

Bacolod (034)441-0458/59		Iloilo (033)336-8070 to 78
MANO PO 2	1	MANO PO 2
FILIPINAS	2	FILIPINAS
GAGAMBOY	3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
CRYING LADIES	4	BRIDAL SHOWER
MALIKMATA	5	GAGAMBOY
ELF	6	CRYING LADIES

Star Mills (045)875-1927 (045)961-5270
San Fernando Pampanga

1	BRIDAL SHOWER
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	FILIPINAS
4	GAGAMBOY
5	CRYING LADIES
6	MANO PO 2

MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

NFL playoffs on

FOXBORO, Massachusetts—When Tom Brady steps in an NFL huddle, he's the boss. When he jumps in the arms of a teammate who just caught his touchdown pass, he's an excited kid.

But when anyone looks at his statistics, the numbers that supposedly measure a quarterback's greatness, they're nothing special.

"You know the numbers I look at this year? 14-2," Patriots running back Antowain Smith said. "You've got a guy running the team that puts us in the best situation to win."

Those numbers gave the Patriots the NFL's best record this season and a chance for their second Super Bowl championship in three years.

They're off this weekend when their first playoff opponent—Baltimore, Denver or Tennessee—will be determined. That team will face a hot quarterback. During the Patriots' current 12-game winning streak, Brady has thrown for 18 touchdowns and five interceptions.

He is a perfect symbol of a group of humble players who see the end zone for what it is: a place to score six points and not one from which to make cell phone calls.

"I don't think we have very grand illusions of ourselves," Brady said last weekend after throwing four touchdown passes in a 31-0 win over Buffalo. "It has been fun to be part of a team that doesn't have an ego."

The players mirror their coach, Bill Belichick, known for his painstaking attention to detail and lack of flash. *AP*

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This movie contains scary scenes that may not be suitable for very young viewers. parental guidance is proposed

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DINGDONG DANTES
RICKY DAVAO
WOWIE DE GUZMAN
ANNA CAPRI
NIKKI VALDEZ
AND
MS. BARBARA PEREZ
RICA PERALEJO
MALIKMATA
HANDA KA NA BANG MATAKOT?
DIRECTED BY JOSE JAVIER REYES dgpi
ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK FROM OCTOARTS · ORBIT MUSIC
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2003
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Best Original Story • Best Cinematography • Best Production Design • Best Float

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FANTASTIC SUPERHERO NG BAYAN

MTRCB RATING ▶ G GENERAL PATRONAGE | ALL AGES ADMITTED

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MICHAEL V.
ALICIA MAYER
VIC SOTTO
FANTASTIC MAN
DIRECTED BY
TONY Y. REYES, DGPI
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ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK FROM OCTOARTS - ORBIT MUSIC
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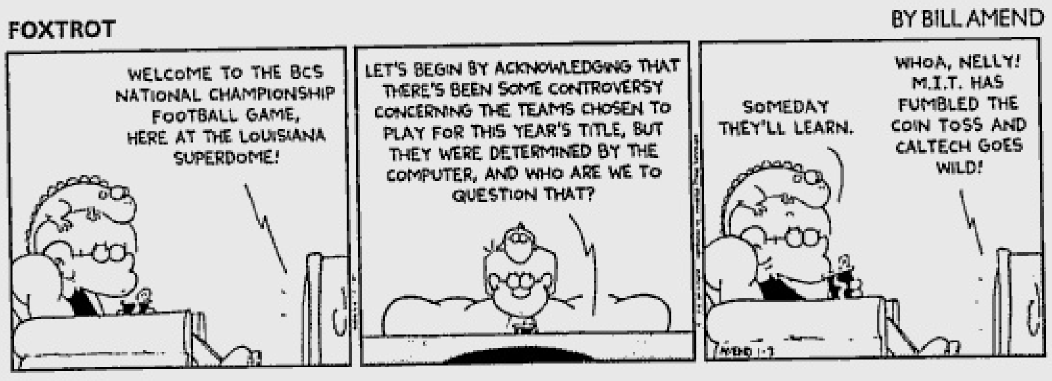
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

ComicRelief

e-mail feedback at arts@inquirer.com.ph

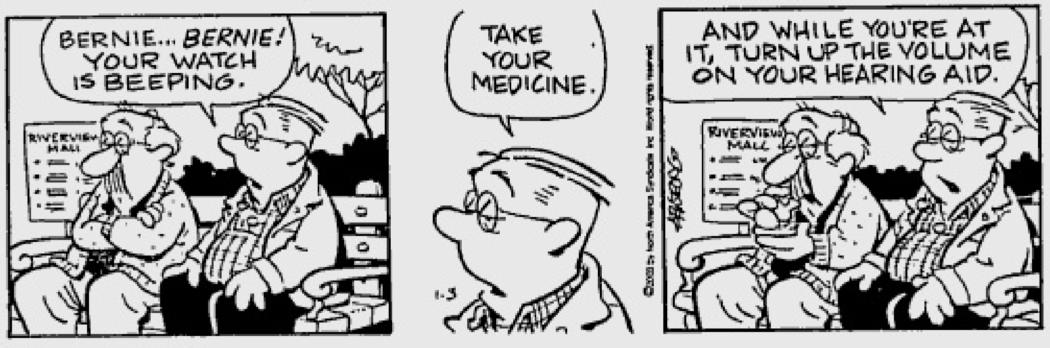
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


WELCOME TO THE BCS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP FOOTBALL GAME, HERE AT THE LOUISIANA SUPERDOME!
LET'S BEGIN BY ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THERE'S BEEN SOME CONTROVERSY CONCERNING THE TEAMS CHOSEN TO PLAY FOR THIS YEAR'S TITLE, BUT THEY WERE DETERMINED BY THE COMPUTER, AND WHO ARE WE TO QUESTION THAT?
SOMEDAY THEY'LL LEARN.
WHOA, NELLY! M.I.T. HAS FUMBLED THE COIN TOSS AND CALTECH GOES WILD!
AMEND 1-3

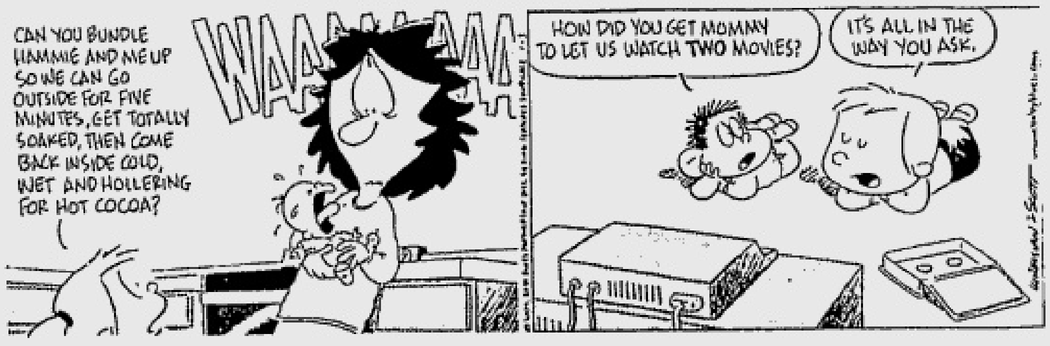
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


BERNIE... BERNIE! YOUR WATCH IS BEEPING.
RIVERVIEW MALL
TAKE YOUR MEDICINE.
1-3
AND WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, TURN UP THE VOLUME ON YOUR HEARING AID.
ARMSTRONG

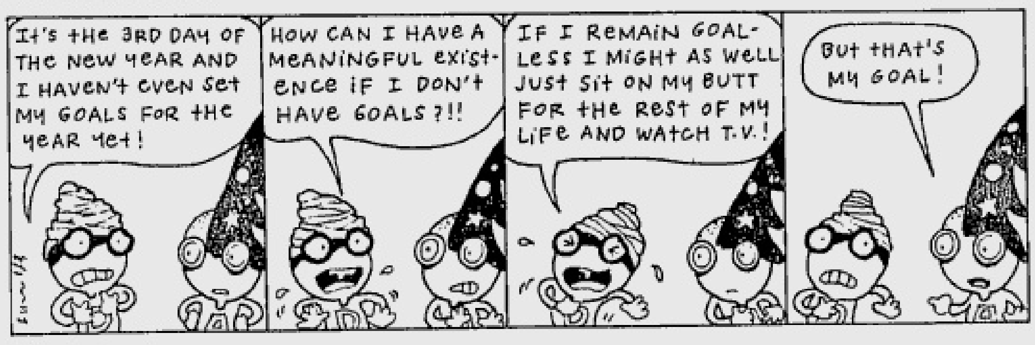
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


CAN YOU BUNDLE HAMMIE AND ME UP SO WE CAN GO OUTSIDE FOR FIVE MINUTES, GET TOTALLY SOAKED, THEN COME BACK INSIDE COLD, WET AND HOLLERING FOR HOT COCOA?
WAAAAAAAA
HOW DID YOU GET MOMMY TO LET US WATCH TWO MOVIES?
IT'S ALL IN THE WAY YOU ASK.

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


It's the 3RD DAY OF THE NEW YEAR AND I HAVEN'T EVEN SET MY GOALS FOR THE YEAR YET!
HOW CAN I HAVE A MEANINGFUL EXISTENCE IF I DON'T HAVE GOALS?!!
IF I REMAIN GOAL-LESS I MIGHT AS WELL JUST SIT ON MY BUTT FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE AND WATCH T.V.!
BUT THAT'S MY GOAL!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are dedicated and hard-working. No job is too big for you. Whatever you attempt, you do it thoroughly with great attention to detail. Nothing is overlooked. You believe in being of service to others. You are also skillfully persuasive. Secrets are important to you. The year ahead is full of fresh starts and new beginnings for you.

Birthdate of: J.R.R. Tolkien, writer; Mel Gibson, actor; Dabney Coleman, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Things begin to slow down at work now. Don't worry, because this will benefit you. This is the year when you improve your health and working conditions!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Reconsider plans connected with vacations, creative projects or activities with children. These plans need to be tweaked in some way. (These are all areas that favor you this year.)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Plans to expand your domestic situation or improve your home might be delayed temporarily. Nevertheless, your home will definitely improve this year.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Your daily sense of optimism and belief in yourself gains steadily this year. You find it much easier to expect the best for yourself. You enjoy being with people more. Yay!

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Fortunately, the year ahead promises an increase in your earnings and certainly in your physical assets. You will enrich your life in some way. (Lucky you.)

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You're rowing with the tide this year. Lucky Jupiter is in your sign and will stay there until late September. Bonus!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Be extra-patient with partners and close friends now. Your achievements might threaten others for some reason. Keep a close watch on domestic matters and your family dynamic.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): This is not a day to stay at home. Get out and run errands, take short trips, do some shopping and visit friends. Today and tomorrow are both active, busy days. (It's that kind of weekend.)

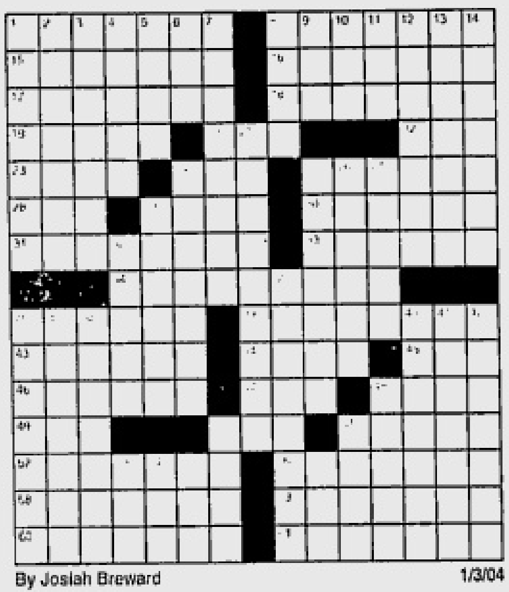
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Plan on enjoying some playful activities with children. All kinds of theatrical and creative entertainment will appeal to you now. Romance gets a nice boost this weekend as well!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): With two planets in your sign now, you're empowered! Don't hesitate to speak up and tell others your opinions about things. People are ready to listen to you now.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You can achieve much now because Venus helps you to be diplomatic, and yet Mars makes you forceful and influential. This is a wonderful combination. Milk this for all its worth!

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Your closest relationships are definitely beginning to improve now. If you survived last year, you can survive anything!

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Josiah Breward
Scranton, PA

1/3/04

ACROSS
1 Lengthen
8 Rules of speech
15 Income
16 Within earshot
17 Football teams
18 Keepers of sacred fires
19 Fathers
20 Word ignored when alphabetizing
22 Wager
23 Move merchandise
24 Couple
25 Melonlike tropical fruit
28 Gabor of "Green Acres"
29 Land of the Incas
30 More level
31 Puts back
33 Most reasonable
34 Having no appetite
36 Allowed to live
39 Confused
43 Confused jumble
44 Galena and mispickel
45 John Lennon's Yoko
46 "Gunsmoke" star
47 Sure thing!
48 Monsters of "Them!"
49 Victoria's Secret offering
50 Ninnyhammer
51 Ties
52 Word-for-word
56 Honeybunch
58 "CHiPs" co-star Erik
59 Sincere
60 Truncate
61 Hereditary rulers

DOWN
1 Iron worker?
2 Furnish aid to
3 Coincide partially
4 Carpentry tool
5 Billfold filler
6 Church sister
7 One using hand signals
8 Contributed
9 Paris street
10 TV spots
11 Sch. near Harvard
12 Capital of Swaziland
13 On the qui vive
14 Take it again from the top
21 Odd-job guys
24 Cracks the cipher
25 Club-shaped tools
26 Is of use
27 Pound pieces
29 Junes
32 Big
35 Touched tenderly
36 Hotels for horses
37 Illustrator Maxfield
38 Lipstick tree
40 Contributes
41 Eliminate kinks
42 Hot milk drinks curdled with wine or ale
48 Stage type
50 Arkin or Shepard
51 Laura of "Wild at Heart"
53 Make a miscalculation
54 Common rodent
55 Summertime drink
57 Manner

Friday's Puzzle Solved

A	C	M	E	■	J	A	W	E	D	■	L	I	M	E
D	R	A	G	■	A	G	I	L	E	■	E	L	A	N
D	O	Y	O	U	G	E	T	M	Y	D	R	I	F	T
S	P	A	■	G	U	N	S	■	■	O	N	A	I	R
■	■	■	S	L	A	Y	■	S	O	M	E	D	A	Y
Z	E	P	H	Y	R	■	T	A	P	I	R	■	■	■
U	V	E	A	■	■	S	E	D	A	N	■	H	A	S
L	E	T	M	E	S	P	E	L	L	I	T	O	U	T
U	S	F	■	S	H	I	N	Y	■	■	U	L	N	A
■	■	■	S	P	U	R	S	■	S	A	F	E	T	Y
P	O	R	C	I	N	E	■	P	A	N	T	■	■	■
S	P	A	R	E	■	■	S	O	L	E	■	T	O	P
H	E	R	E	S	H	O	W	I	T	W	O	R	K	S
A	R	E	A	■	E	R	A	S	E	■	F	U	R	S
W	A	R	M	■	M	E	T	E	D	■	F	E	A	T

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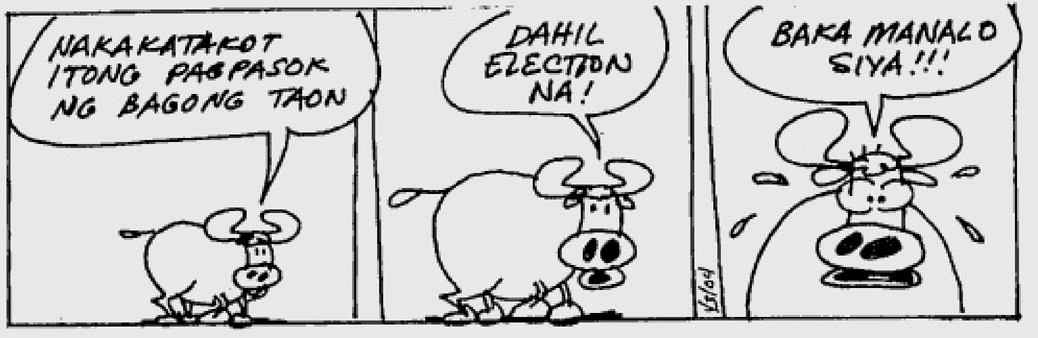
1/3/04

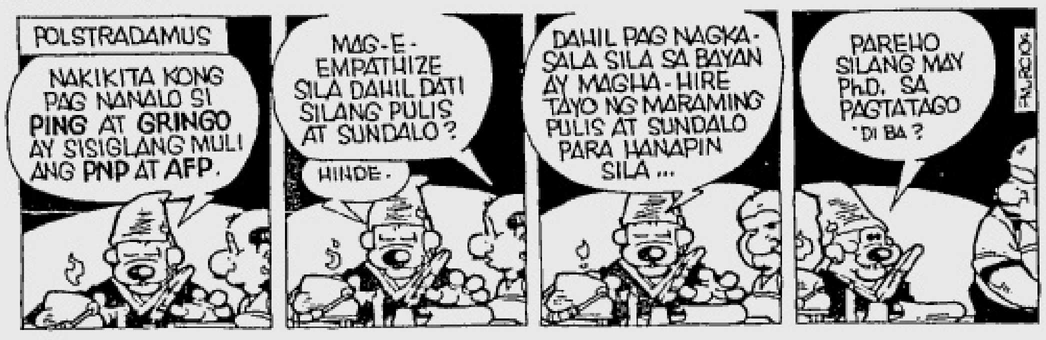
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


NAKAKATAKOT ITONG PAGPASOK NG BAGONG TAON
DAHIL ELECTION NA!
BAKA MANALO SIYA!!!

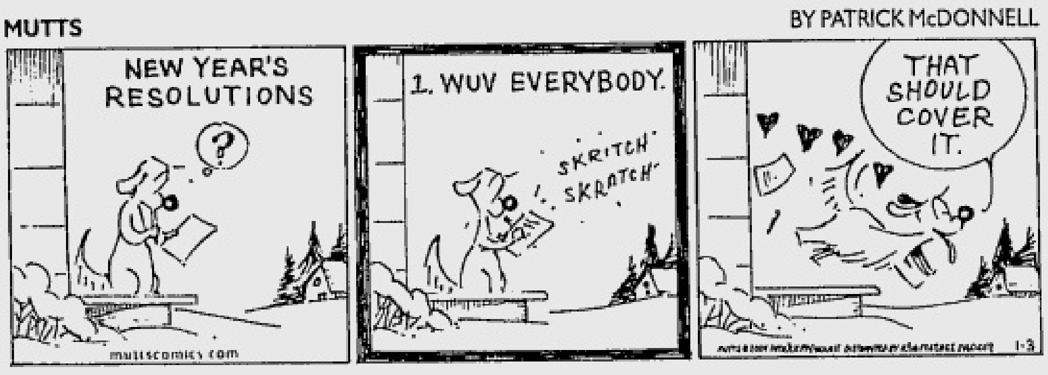
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


POLSTRADAMUS
NAKIKITA KONG PAG NANALO SI PING AT GRINGO AY SISIGLANG MULI ANG PNP AT AFP.
MAG-E-EMPATHIZE SILA DAHIL DATI SILANG PULIS AT SUNDALO?
HINDE.
DAHIL PAG NAGKA-SALA SILA SA BAYAN AY MAGHA-HIRE TAYO NG MARAMING PULIS AT SUNDALO PARA HANAPIN SILA...
PAREHO SILANG MAY PhD. SA PAGTATAGO 'DI BA?
PMJR.'04

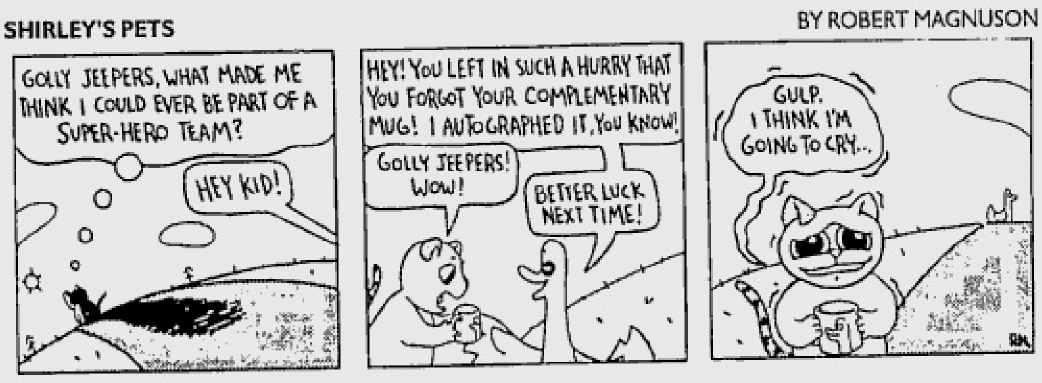
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS
?
muttscomics.com
1. WUV EVERYBODY.
SKRITCH SKRATCH
THAT SHOULD COVER IT.
1-3

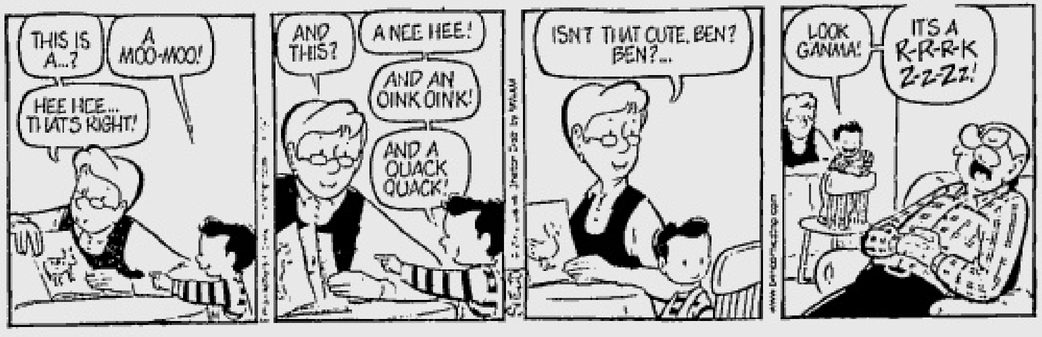
SHIRLEY'S PETS

BY ROBERT MAGNUSON


GOLLY JEEPERS, WHAT MADE ME THINK I COULD EVER BE PART OF A SUPER-HERO TEAM?
HEY KID!
HEY! YOU LEFT IN SUCH A HURRY THAT YOU FORGOT YOUR COMPLEMENTARY MUG! I AUTOGRAPHED IT, YOU KNOW!
GOLLY JEEPERS! WOW!
BETTER LUCK NEXT TIME!
GULP. I THINK I'M GOING TO CRY...
RM

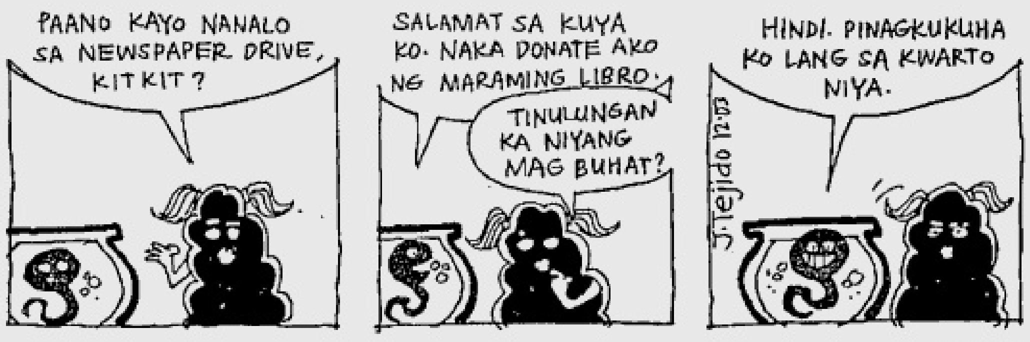
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


THIS IS A...?
A MOO-MOO!
HEE HEE... THAT'S RIGHT!
AND THIS?
A NEE HEE!
AND AN OINK OINK!
AND A QUACK QUACK!
ISN'T THAT CUTE, BEN? BEN?...
LOOK GANMA!
IT'S A R-R-R-K Z-Z-ZZ!

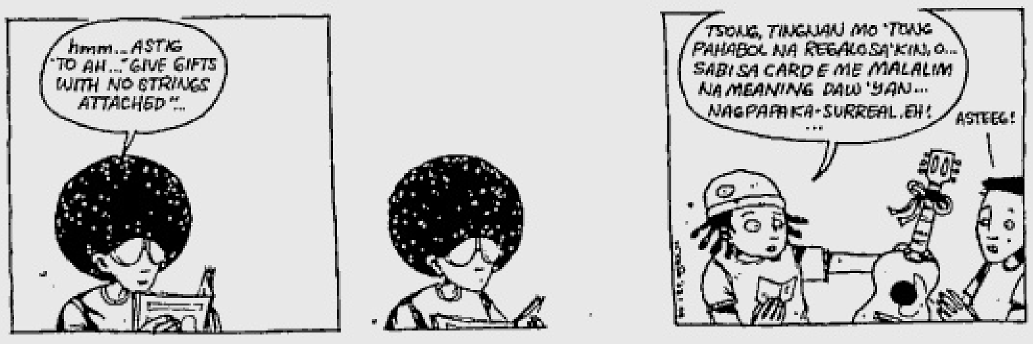
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


PAANO KAYO NANALO SA NEWSPAPER DRIVE, KITKIT?
SALAMAT SA KUYA KO. NAKA DONATE AKO NG MARAMING LIBRO.
TINULUNGAN KA NIYANG MAG BUHAT?
J. Tejido 12.03
HINDI. PINAGKUKUHA KO LANG SA KWARTO NIYA.

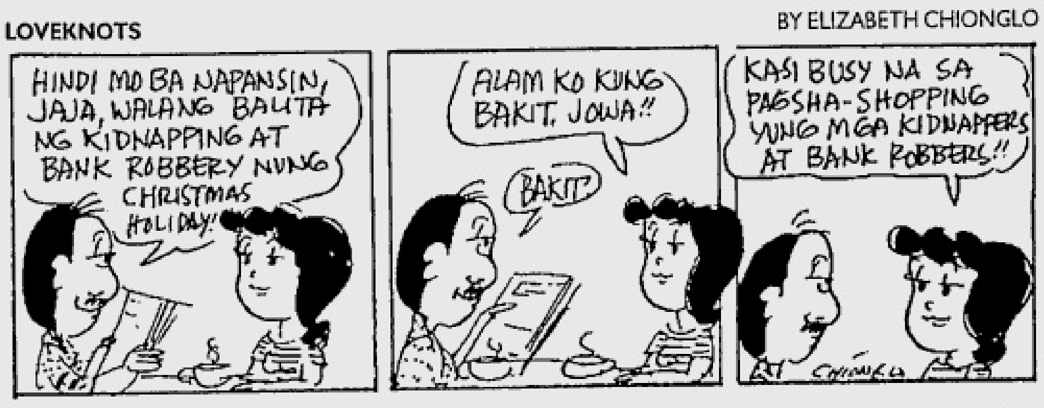
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


hmm... ASTIG 'TO AH... "GIVE GIFTS WITH NO STRINGS ATTACHED"...
TSONG, TINGNAN MO 'TONG PAHABOL NA REGALO SA'KIN, O... SABI SA CARD E ME MALALIM NA MEANING DAW 'YAN... NAGPAPAKA-SURREAL, EH! ...
ASTEEG!

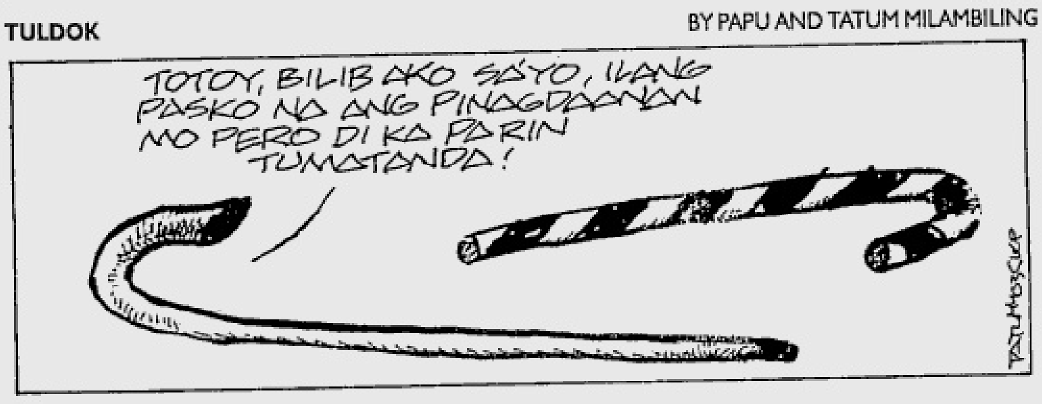
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


HINDI MO BA NAPANSIN, JAJA, WALANG BALITA NG KIDNAPPING AT BANK ROBBERY NUNG CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY!
ALAM KO KUNG BAKIT, JOWA!!
BAKIT?
KASI BUSY NA SA PAGSHA-SHOPPING YUNG MGA KIDNAPPERS AT BANK ROBBERS!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


TOTOY, BILIB AKO SA'YO, ILANG PASKO NA ANG PINAGDAANAN MO PERO DI KA PARIN TUMATANDA!
TATUM

Afghans also join slugfest

By Dennis U. Eroa

ANOTHER country with a history of conflict confirmed its attendance in the 22nd Asian Boxing First Olympic qualifying, which has already attracted 32 countries on Jan. 10 to 18 at the Puerto Princesa Coliseum.

Afghanistan, which is seeking to attain normalcy and promote goodwill among its fellow Asian countries, will join Iraq, Iran and North Korea and others which are seeking international rapport through sports.

ABAP President Manny Lopez yesterday confirmed that the Afghan national boxing team will come in the event offering 24 slots for the Athens Olympics.

China and Pakistan, with a total of 38 Olympics slots up for grabs, will host the second and final qualifying, respectively.

"Yes, Afghanistan is coming. Palawan, Puerto Princesa and ABAP are delighted to play a crucial role in creating goodwill among Asian nationals. Indeed, sports is a bridge towards friendship and normalcy," said Lopez.

Lopez said that with the help of Palawan Gov. Joel T. Reyes and Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn, this qualifying is headed for a resounding success.

Supporting the event are the Philippine Sports Commission, Accel, Pacific Heights and

AFGHANS/ A24

Araneta Center
ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7

Ali 1	MANO PO 2
Ali 2	FILIPINAS
Ali 3	CAPTAIN BARBEL
Ali 4	CRYING LADIES
Ali 5	MALIKMATA
Ali 6	FANTASTIC MAN
Ali 7	HOMECOMING

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JAN 3	DISNEY ON ICE - 1PM / 4:30PM / 8PM
JAN 4	DISNEY ON ICE - 1PM / 4:30PM / 8PM
JAN 12	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
JAN 14	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
JAN 19	WORLD SLASHER CUP 2004
JAN 20	DAVID GATES CONCERT
JAN 21	WORLD SLASHER CUP 2004

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THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	MALIKMATA
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	LIBERATED
B	AKO, IKAW, SIYA
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	BIKTIMA
CINEMA-2	ALIPIN
CINEMA-3	WAG KANG KIKIBO
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	MR SUAVE
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	LORD OF THE RINGS 1
CINEMA-6	CHAWIT
CINEMA-7	BABAE SA BREAKWATER
CINEMA-8	ASBOOBS
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LOST ISLAND
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LORDS OF THE RINGS 2
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	STAR RUNNER
CINEMA-12	CABIN FEVER
CINEMA-14	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-15	ELF
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PINAS)	OUT OF TIME
CINEMA-1	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-2	FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS
CINEMA-4	COLD CREEK MANOR
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

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CINEMA 1	MANO PO 2 11:00, 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00 GP	CINEMA 2	CRYING LADIES 11:20, 2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00 PG 13

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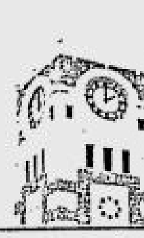

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SPORTS

Blu aims for 3rd semis slot

GAMES TODAY (*Pasig Sports Center*)
2 p.m.—Viva-FEU vs Blu Star
4 p.m.—Fash Liquid vs Montana

BLU STAR Detergent shoots for the third semifinal slot against Viva-FEU, when the PBL Platinum Cup resumes today at the Pasig Sports Center.

The Detergent Kings (6-4), who won their last game before the Holiday break, are slightly favored to hurdle the Water Force (3-6) at 2 p.m. to join early qualifiers Welcoat (8-2) and Sunkist-UST (7-4).

Fash Liquid and Montaña, tied for fourth at 4-5, try to move closer to the semis when they tangle at 4 p.m.

Though the Detergent Kings are coming off an 80-74 triumph over Liquid Power, the Water Force are on a two-game winning streak, which helped resuscitate their campaign.

"This is a tough challenge for me and my boys but we have to believe in ourselves to survive this test," said Viva coach Koy Banal. "With the way my boys are playing, I'm confident we can do it again."

Banal and the Water Force are no strangers to hardships.Back in the Sunkist-Unity Cup, Viva also struggled from the start but finished strong to make the finals.

On the other hand, Blu Star coach Leo Isaac is wary that the 12-day respite could work against his team. The Detergent Kings, he said, must display the same fiery passion they showed in getting back at the Liquid Power last Dec. 22. *Marc Reyes*

JUNGOLF

Jenny to grace RP-Japan tilt

ROSALES: Excited to see the kids

LPGA standout Jenny Rosales will join the invited VIPs in hitting the ceremonial balls for the inaugural Philippines-Japan Friendship tournament on Monday (Jan. 5) at the scenic Tagaytay Midlands Golf Club.

Rosales, one of the most successful products of the local jungolf movement, will take a break from her training for the new LPGA season to grace the year's opening event for junior golf.

"She's really excited to see the kids and we know the kids are looking forward to meeting her as well," said Amalia "Mommy" Montecillo of Jenny who had 2003 as her best season in a four-year pro career.

The best jungolfers of the country are facing off with a delegation from Fukuoka, Japan in the 36-hole tourney sponsored by Tagaytay Midlands, Comworks, Milkjoy, IWSI, Bong Lopez Golf Management and La Jolla Golf.

Boys and girls from both countries will be contending for the top awards in Class A (15-17 years), Class B (13-14) and Class C (11-12) and the special division for those 10 years and below.

The RP-Japan tiff is actually an extension of a busy holiday break for local jungolfers punctuated by close duels in all age-groups.

Nonoy Negrido, unbeaten in his last four tournaments, and PSA awardee Jayvie Agojo head the Philippine challenge in Class A.

Also entered are the standouts of last year's overseas campaigns including US Kids World champions Dottie Ardina and AR Ramos, Desert Classic winners Terence Macatangay and Wolen Superal, Sarawak Chief Ministers Cup titlist Ma-an Legaspi and Andie Unson, the best performer in the Junior World.

The Japanese delegation is arriving today and will motor straight to the exclusive Tagaytay Highlands, where they will stay for the duration of the tournament.

Afghans ...

From page A23

Revicon.

Just like Iraq, Afghanistan is trying to recover from the wounds of conflicts, which cost thousands of lives and destroyed their respective economies.

Gov. Reyes and Mayor Hagedorn said Palaweños eagerly await the arrival of the competing countries.

"The country's Last Frontier is ready to welcome our brothers with open arms," said the duo.

"The entry of Afghanistan, Iraq and North Korea add to the excitement of the tournament which we are proud to host," the political leaders said.

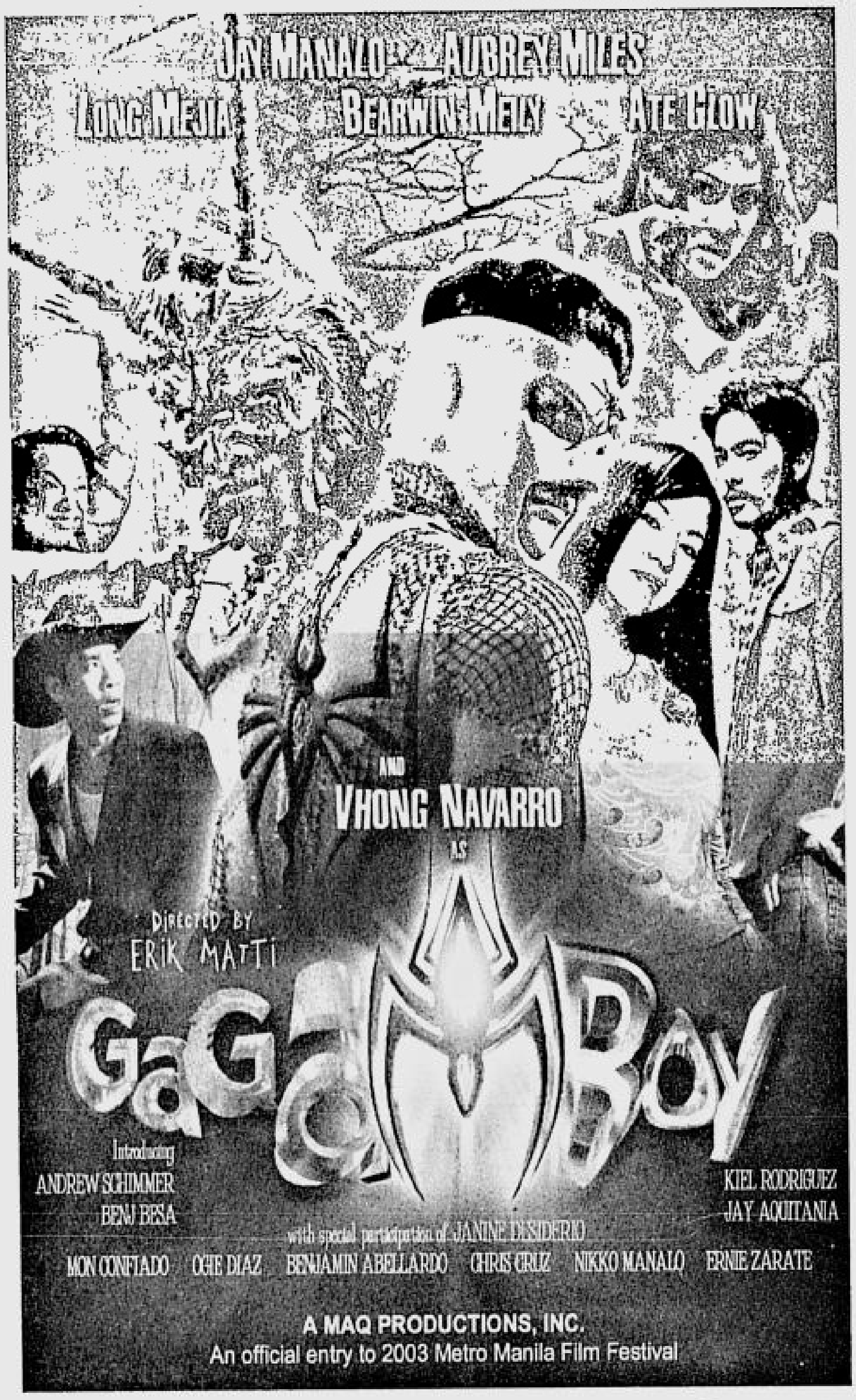
According to an AP report, the Iraqi team is carrying the slogan "Iraq is back" as it competes in the qualifying. Iraq is an Asian power in soccer, but is still to create an impact in boxing.

Both Gov. Reyes and Mayor Hagedorn said everything is in place for the successful staging of the tournament in the country.

"The people of Palawan and Puerto Princesa are excited and ready to prove that they can serve as wonderful, hardworking hosts for our Asian neighbors," said the duo.

Some of the countries coming for the tournament are the national teams of Thailand, Pakistan, China, Chinese-Taipei, India, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyztan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Macau, Malaysia, Mongolia, Turkmenistan, Takijistan, Uzbekistan, Syria and Sri Lanka.

THE BATTLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL IS COMING TO TOWN!



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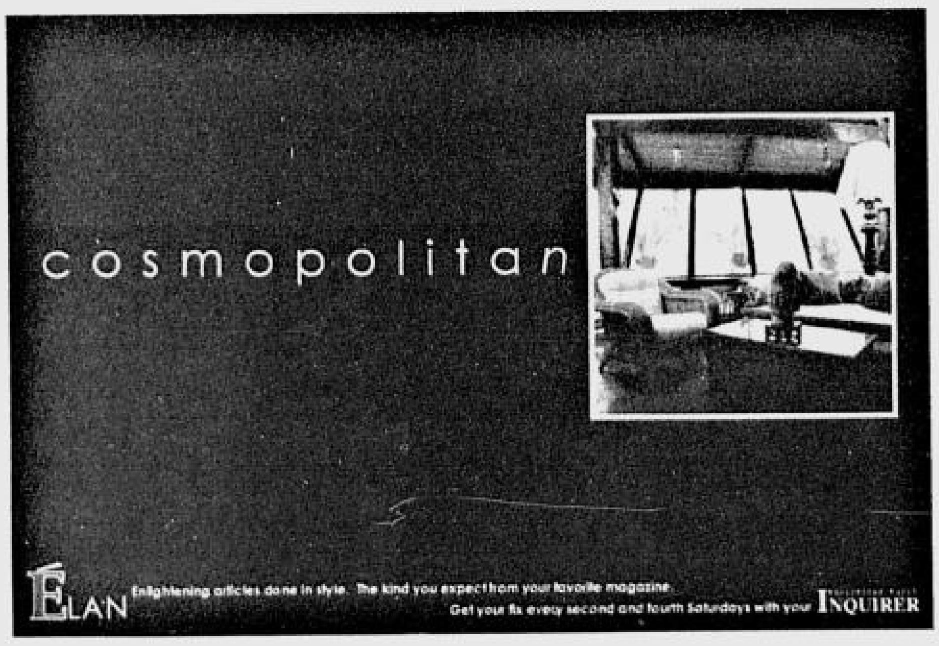

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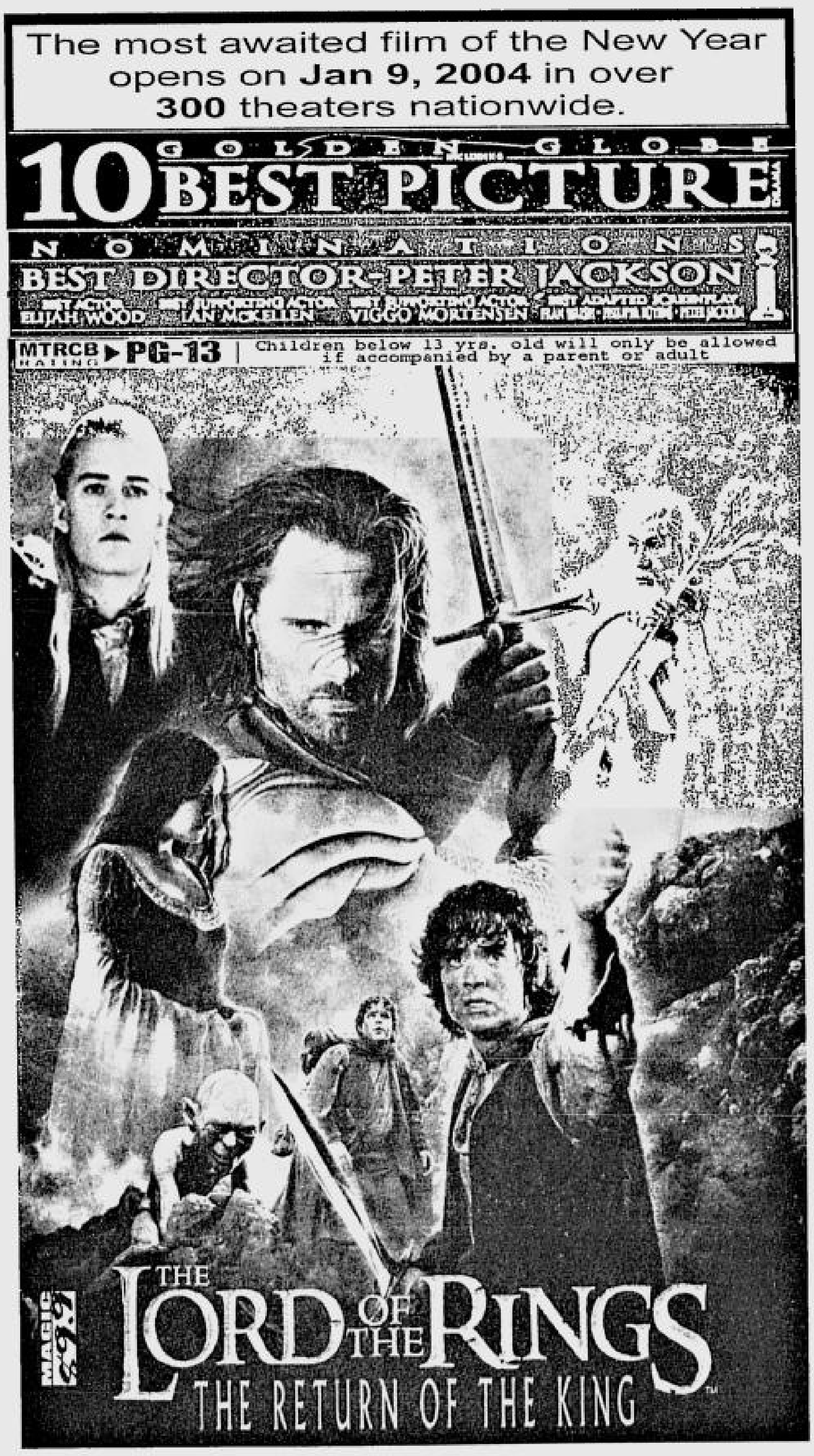

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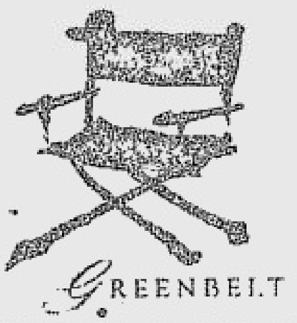

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12-YR PESO LENDING FACILITY

RP, ADB sign $200-M currency swap deal

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE PHILIPPINES and the Asian Development Bank have sealed a $200-million currency swap arrangement that will lead to the creation of a 12-year peso lending facility for local companies that are in need of long-term funds.

Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong said the government was exploring a similar arrangement with the International Finance Corp., the investment arm of the World Bank.

Under the deal with the ADB, which the finance chief said was the first of its kind, the Philippine government will in effect buy from the ADB $200 million in cash to be paid in pesos, which will be used by the agency for its 12-year peso lending facility. The exchange rate will be based on the prevailing rate at the time of the signing of the agreement.

Amatong said the ADB's new peso lending facility would not only give local borrowers access to long-term funds but also protect them from foreign exchange risks.

The currency swap arrangement with the ADB was approved by the policy-making Monetary Board of the central bank last September.

Amatong said the IFC had expressed interest in entering into a similar arrangement.

The finance chief said the Department of Justice had issued a legal opinion supporting the legitimacy of the swap deal between the government and the ADB.

"This is a good arrangement," Amatong quoted the DOJ opinion.

She said the arrangement would also boost the country's dollar reserves that stood at about $16.4 billion as of end last year, according to Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura.

"The dollar inflow should boost our international reserves and also improve our balance-of-payments position," the BSP chief said earlier.

"Borrowers will be able to take advantage of the concessional rate offered by the ADB. The rate will be close to ODA (Official Development Assistance) rate. They will be able to save on the borrowing cost," added Amatong.

She said the IFC was also seriously thinking of entering into a similar arrangement. The IFC's initial plan was to swap the dollars with a bank and use the peso proceeds to open a seven-year

RP/ B2

Construction sector to grow 7.8%, says Neda

By Doris C. Dumlao

CONSTRUCTION, a laggard in the industrial sector, will likely pick up this year on the back of an expected strong public spending, the National Economic and Development Authority said.

Based on Neda's forecasts, the construction sector will grow by 7.3-7.8 percent this year, a reversal of the projected 8.4 percent contraction for 2003.

The projected growth in the construction industry is expected to boost the overall investment picture during the year. Investments, according to Neda, are seen to expand by 6.8-7.4 percent from last year's 0.4 percent.

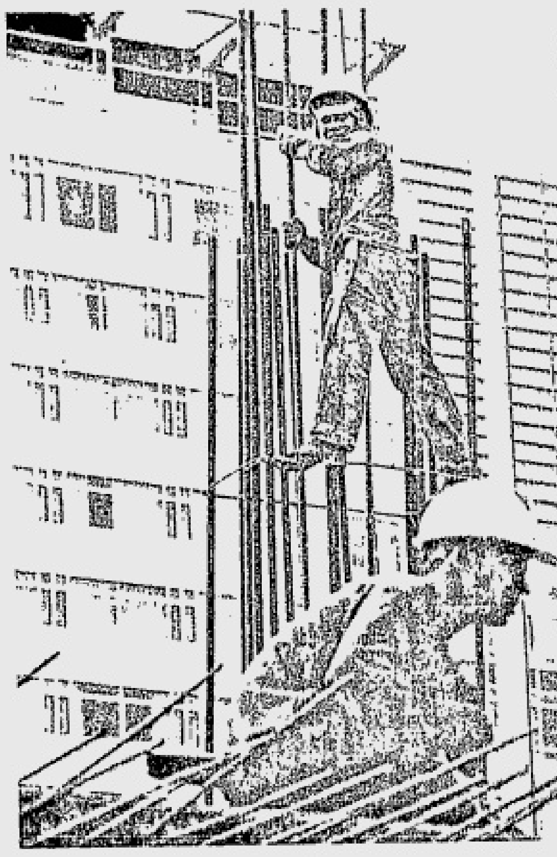
"This takes into account the growth in public spending. There will be about 19 percent nominal growth in capital spending by government-owned and -controlled corporations," said Neda director for policy research Scholastica Cororaton.

Based on the proposed budget for 2004, Cororaton said there would be a lot of construction requirements for state projects alone, including the Leyte power project and the Light Railway Transit expansion.

In the national accounts, construction is treated as part of capital formation on the expenditure side of the accounts and as an industry under the production accounts.

As part of capital formation, construction includes all new construction projects, additions, alteration and major repairs of residential and non-residential buildings, roads, bridges and other infrastructures including land development but excludes the acquisition cost of land. Secondary activities such as the provision of technical/engineering services and the manufacturing of construction materials undertaken by construction firms, and cost of installation of equipment and machinery are also included.

The classification of construction under the expenditure accounts distinguishes private and public construction. All construction owned by the government whether government or privately managed are classified as public construction and the rest is classified as private.



AFTER a slump last year, construction activities are expected to bounce back this year.
PDI FILE PHOTO

BIR, Customs expected to exceed '03 targets

THE BUREAU of Internal Revenue is expected to hit or even exceed its P424-billion collection target for this year.

Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr., citing preliminary data, said that as of Dec. 30, the BIR had already collected P420.37 billion.

Parayno said the final data would be available by Jan. 10 due to reporting lags particularly in the provinces. The BIR still needed to raise P3.6 billion to meet its target.

"We are expecting collections to continue coming in up to Jan. 10. Given that, we are estimating that we will not only meet the target but even exceed it slightly," said Parayno in an interview.

In the meantime, the Bureau of Customs reported that as of Dec. 30, its tariff collection stood at P105.2 billion against a target of P100.56 billion. This year's performance is expected to set a new record for the bureau, dislodging the 1996 record of P98.947 billion.

The BIR contributes 72 percent of the government's total revenue while the Customs accounts for at least 17 percent.

Due to strong revenue collection last year, the government said it could nail down the budget deficit below P200 billion, against a ceiling of P202 billion and last year's gap of P210.7 billion.

"I think we could end the year with about P200 billion or even lower," said Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong. The 11-month deficit stood at P172.204 billion against a ceiling of P189.7 billion.

In December, the government must limit the deficit to P12.3 billion. However, the budget department said it would exceed expenditure target by P5 billion in view of the P5,000 cash gift given to public workers.

In the same month, revenue must hit at least P51 billion while spending should be contained within P63.3 billion. *Clarissa S. Batino*

Garment exports seen growing by 5% this year

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GARMENTS and Textile Export Board said it was expecting garment exports to grow 5 percent this year, from the projected zero growth in 2003.

The growth, according to the GTEB, will come from the projected expansion of export markets for Philippine garments.

The 5-percent industry growth projection will bring the total garment export receipts this year to $2.94 billion, higher than the expected $2.8 billion in exports last year. Garment exports in 2002 stood also at $2.8 billion.

GTEB executive director Serafin Juliano said in a press briefing that most local garment manufacturers were now focusing their production on branded clothing, which still enjoy comparative advantage over similar products from other countries.

He said markets for basic clothing had been captured mostly by Chinese exporters.

He said the GTEB's Industry Transformation Plan for the garments sector focused on helping local garment manufacturers shift their production from basic to branded clothing. The shift, he said, would make them more competitive and prepare them for the quota-free regime which will start in 2005.

As of Dec. 14, the country's garment exports stood at $2.626 billion, or 3.68 percent lower than the $2.726 billion recorded during the same period in 2002.

The quota-free regime, which is mandated by the World Trade Organization, means quantitative restrictions on garments exports to the biggest buyers--the United States, the European Union and Canada-will be removed.

Asian markets get off to a strong start

SINGAPORE—Major Asian stock markets started 2004 on a strong note yesterday as investors bet the year would bring solid economic growth, while the dollar steadied after New Year passed with no big attacks in the West.

South Korean shares had risen 0.8 percent, lifted by a 3.7-percent jump in Hyundai Motor Co. after it delivered a rosy sales outlook for 2004 on hopes of an improving US economy and a pick-up in domestic sales.

"Investors believe a bullish market trend will continue in the equities markets for now, given the positive economic fundamentals," said Hwang Joong-kwon, an analyst at Hyundai Securities.

Shares in Hong Kong rose more than one percent to hover near two-and-a-half year highs. Chinese companies dominated trade with investors hungry for a piece of China's booming economy.

An MSCI index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan continued to post three-year highs, hitting 223.01 on Friday, before easing back a little to 222.96, up 0.4 percent. The index jumped 44 percent last year.

Stock benchmarks rose 0.9 percent in Singapore and 1.7 percent in Taiwan, while Australia was flat. Markets in Japan will reopen after their extended New Year holiday on Monday.

In the meantime, the US dollar has recovered from another life low against the euro, hit on New Year's Eve, but traders expected it to resume falling soon because of global security concerns and the ballooning US current account deficit.

The euro was trading at around $1.2531, off more than a cent from the latest record high of $1.2647, while the Japanese yen was steady at around 107.30 per dollar. *Reuters*

South Korean Deputy Prime Minister cum Minister of Finance and Economy Kim Jin-pyo gives a mock ten thousand-Korean won note to a bull as a symbolic gesture for good luck at the Korea Stock Exchange in Seoul.

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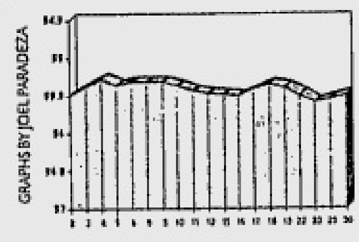
CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



DECEMBER

₱ 55.50 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 30, 2003

¥ 106.96 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 30, 2003

GOLD: $413.80-414.30
per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 30, 2003

December 30, 2003 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.800961	1.000000	55.569000
Japan	Yen	0.007478	0.009336	0.518800
United Kingdom	Pound	1.420024	1.772900	98.518300
Hongkong	Dollar	0.103186	0.128828	7.158800
Switzerland	Franc	0.640871	0.800128	44.462300
Canada	Dollar	0.611141	0.763009	42.399600
Singapore	Dollar	0.470655	0.587613	32.653100
Australia	Dollar	0.594317	0.742005	41.232500
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.124622	2.652590	147.401800
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.213590	0.266667	14.818400
Brunei	Dollar	0.469277	0.585892	32.557400
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000118	0.006600
Thailand	Baht	0.020236	0.025265	1.404000
UAE	Dirham	0.218085	0.272279	15.130300
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.248500	69.377900
Argentina	Peso	0.271512	0.338983	18.836900
Brazil	Real	0.280155	0.349773	19.436500
Denmark	Kroner	0.134324	0.167704	9.319100
India	Rupee	0.017565	0.021930	1.218600
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.210807	0.263193	14.625400
Mexico	New Peso	0.071406	0.089150	4.954000
New Zealand	Dollar	0.519262	0.648298	36.025300
Norway	Kroner	0.118643	0.148126	8.231200
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013939	0.017403	0.967100
Korea	Won	0.000669	0.000835	0.046400
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023585	0.029446	1.636300
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000502	0.000627	0.034800

STOCK MARKET

Stocks end 2003 up 42%

LOCAL stocks last Tuesday succumbed to profit-taking after a creeping yearend rally, but fresh optimism for the new year remained as the main-share index ended 2003 with a 42-percent gain.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index lost 8.33 points last Tuesday to close at 1,442.37 before the market paused for another long holiday break.

Despite the slight drop in the Phisix, gainers still outnumbered losers 36 to 16, with 43 stocks unchanged.

The all-shares index was still up by 5.28 points at 874.78.

"There are still a lot of stocks which moved up due to window-dressing. Look at JG Summit (Holdings)," said Eagle Equities president Joseph Roxas.

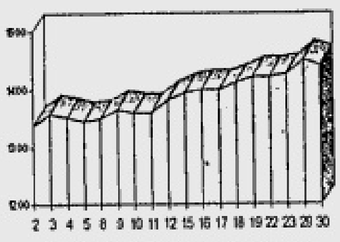
For the full-year, however, AB Capital Securities analyst Jose Vistan said the 42-percent gain was a testament to how well the economy fared despite various local and global shocks.

Local stocks started out slow in 2003 amid uncertainties over the Iraq war, the outbreak of the SARS killer virus and the global slump in the early part of the year.

Foreign funds likewise trickled back to the local bourse in the latter part of the year.

Roxas said that when trading resumes on Monday, activity would likely be slow but should pick up after the first week.

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Transco sells sub-transmission assets

STATE firm National Transmission Corp. has closed a deal with San Fernando Electric Light and Power Corp. (Sfelapco) on the sale of sub-transmission facilities in Pampanga, Transco president Alan Ortiz said.

"Sfelapco has shown that it is financially capable to efficiently manage our sub-transmission lines," Ortiz said in a statement. He, however, did not say how much was involved in the sale.

He added that the transfer of ownership and control of the assets would enable the Aboitiz group's Sfelapco to further expand its operations and improve its service.

For Transco's part, Ortiz said the sale would allow it to concentrate on its transmission function in the area as envisioned by the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001.

The assets involved in the deal were the Mexico-Sfelapco line, Mexico-SMC line and the Mexico-Elegant line. These are all rated 69 kilovolts.

"This is just the first (of such sale.) We are optimistic of having similar agreements with other electric distributors soon," Ortiz said.

Last month, he said Transco was going into talks with three distribution utilities on sale of subtransmission assets, including those in Cabanatuan and the franchise areas of Manila Electric Co.

Under the rules issued by the Energy Regulatory Commission, lines used to deliver electricity from power generators to distribution utilities would be regarded as transmission assets, while those used to get power from the utilities to end-users would be classified as sub-transmission assets.

Transco data show that 45 distribution utilities have expressed interest in acquiring government-owned STAs.

As of end 2002, Transco had explored possibilities of selling such assets to 15 utilities.

In November, Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc. chief operating officer Erramon I. Aboitiz said the group was also eyeing sub-transmission lines in Davao City.

In other franchise areas like Cotabato, Aboitiz said it was also possible for AEV to partner with the cooperatives in buying and subsequently operating the assets. ***Ronnel W. Domingo***

El Paso sells petroleum assets for $156M

NEW YORK—Natural gas company El Paso Corp. on Wednesday said it sold some petroleum assets, including its stake in a Philippine company, for about $156 million.

The Houston, Texas-based company announced the sale of its Coastal Unilube assets to an affiliate of Warren Oil Co. Inc. for about $34 million. The deal closed on Dec. 30. The company also said it will receive about $45 million from related working capital reductions.

El Paso added that it sold its 50-percent stake in a Philippines petroleum sales and marketing joint venture as well as its rights in the Subic Bay terminal and Clark pipeline asset leases it held with the Philippines government. The total value of that deal is $77 million, the company said. ***Reuters***

Peerless forecast

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

AROUND this time, with the year just starting, we make a fuss about our future, if any. I mean, it is really a cool tradition.

At this time, come hell, hail, or landslide, combined with a huge budget deficit, we just have to take a peek at the beer mug ... oops, or it could also be the crystal ball.

Anyway, we hear everybody else's fearless forecast everywhere, and we have to suffer through all the loose talk about the "fiesta slash carnival" this May.

Many people are excited, because this Year of the Monkey promises a thrilling, rowdy party which we also refer to as the national elections.

The usual hangers-on in politics, who make a career out of ... well, hanging around power, are already hunting for signs of things to come.

They must depend on those signs to determine what candidate they must suck up to, which is not for anything else, but for peace and national unity. Honest.

* * *

HEREWITH are my own forecasts for the year, peerless in seriousness of thought, unparalleled in the history of fearless forecasting, Madame Auring including.

It was definitely a sign of things to come when the employees of a rich government firm gave First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo a wonderful Christmas gift.

From what I gathered, the company already awarded all its employees, meaning, thousands of them, a 15th month bonus. Again, that's "15" as against "13" for most of us!

Aside from the yearend bonanza, the company held its yearly Christmas party with a bigtime raffle. Among the prizes was a brand-new car.

They held the party at an auditorium. The stage was precisely spruced up for the occasion. On the stage was the entire board.

Entered FGMA, the initials which Palace functionaries use to refer to Mike the Knife, as against PGMA for Gloriaetta.

Apparently, the "P" stands for something, such as "pretty" or "petty" or "putty." Or it could also be "President." Hard to say.

Anyway, nobody knew why FGMA had to be present at the party. Maybe the poor guy only wanted to make a short pitch for his wife.

As if on cue, the crowd started to chant a different alphabet song. Repeated with deafening loudness were the letters "f," "p," and "j." I wonder what they stood for.

* * *

NOBODY can say if that's any indication of things to come this May, not even those who are running for public office upon specific instruction from heaven.

One of the serious ones among those is Eddie Villanueva, whose title in media is "brother" and who is said to have defied the Palace by filing his certificate of candidacy.

Brother Eddie is also said to have gotten control of a television station, the former Channel 11, during the time of the man named Band ... Wrist Band.

Word went around then that, to control the television station, Brother Villanueva actually had to fight it out with another one of his kind.

That was no other than Mike Velarde himself, who is also honored in media with the title "brother."

At that time, it was said that things were beginning to heat up between the two "brothers," and they could not settle their differences, albeit unholy ones.

That was until a banker, Antonio Abacan, president of Metrobank, stepped in to patch things up between them.

It took the boss of the country's biggest bank to help settle the dispute between two "brothers" who are being courted spiritedly by most presidential candidates.

* * *

AGAIN that fight may or may not be a sign of things to come. Still, something in the, ahh, "peace process" may interest you. It was a short simple prayer.

And it did not come from either of the "brothers." It was said by Abacan himself. The prayer then became the "default" prayer before meetings in a Metrobank subsidiary.

It goes:

"Lord, as we go to our meeting today, we ask freshness of Your Spirit to quicken our thinking; that out of confused issues, may come simplicity of plan; that out of fear may come confidence; that out of hurry may come deliberation; that out of frustration may come guidance.

"Let us do our work not head first but heart first.

"May we be able to disagree without being disagreeable, differ without being difficult, be honest without tension, and frank without offense."

* * *

SORRY, I also do not know if, this late in his professional life, Abacan is planning to shift careers from banking to religion, and then politics later.

It's just, well, I thought his prayer fitting for our politicians and government economists who never agree on anything.

But with the problems seen to hound banks this year, with their hundreds of billions of pesos in bad loans, it is not going to be an easy year for bankers.

They could not convince Congress to stop bickering and, please *naman*, just start enacting laws to lay down the legal groundwork to solve the problem.

And so for the banking system, that prayer of Abacan may have some practical uses. For our sake, the banks had better start praying.

* * *

ONE sign of things to come is the season's greeting card from Sen. Loren Legarda, the former television news announcer.

The card shows the beautiful face of the senator on one side, and on another, all the various social works she has done as a public official, and not as a social worker.

On the reverse side are a lot of numbers. Before you know it, it turns into a calendar. The card has dual functions.

It is something useful from this particular senator who is said to be running for vice president, alongside Fernando Poe Jr.

Hers is a tough fight. She is pitted against her more popular colleague at ABS-CBN, Sen. Noli de Castro, whose main achievement in the Senate is not well known. Not even by me.

Anyway, De Castro already announced that he agreed to be the running mate of Gloriaetta. He did not say what finally convinced him.

But word goes around that a certain vice presidentiable had a meeting with a certain bigtime business figure, and they agreed on a particular ... well, sum.

* * *

THIS sign of things to come is about how we must try to make every peso count this year, such as by being selective in sending FPJ "text" jokes.

This year the battle for the text message market is going further into retail. Smart Telecoms and Talk N' Text just fired the first shots.

They just launched a product of pre-paid electronic transfer worth P10. No other telephone company can transfer cell phone "loads" that small.

And that is the typical Pinoy version of retail, the one and only *tingi*, the selling of cigarette per "stick," the repacking of shampoo into "sachet."

In the Smart-Talk N' Text *tingi*, you can transfer P10-loads to friends and relatives in emergency cases, for instance, by charging the loads on your own, plus P1 fee.

If it is any sign of things to come, the group reported almost a million transfers in the first few days since the product was introduced.

But be careful with the sachet loading. Anybody can just ask you for a load, say, somebody who got your number from the maid or your mother-in-law.

If you are gullible enough, go ahead, pretend that you know the person who is asking for a load, even if his, her or its number is not registered on your telephone.

Be careful. Be very careful. Send loads only to family and friends, except the mother-in-law.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 30, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank, Inc.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	10,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17.25	17.75	17.25	17.75	186,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	47	47	46.5	46.5	673,200
Citystate Savings Bank	16	16	16	16	5,000
Equitable PCI Bank, Inc.	34.5	34.5	33.5	33.5	80,400
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.56	0.56	0.5	0.52	17,000,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26.5	27.5	26.5	27.5	1,397,100
Philippine National Bank	24	24.25	24	24.25	13,100
Philippine Trust Co.	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	1,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	20,300
Security Bank Corp.	16.5	17.25	16.5	17.25	173,900
Union Bank of the Phil.	27	27	26	26	11,200
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.4	43,000
First Abacus Financial	0.5	0.51	0.5	0.51	130,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1750	1750	1750	1750	780
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	62,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	200	200	200	200	500
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1350	1370	1350	1365	6,050
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	25	25	25	25	21,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.68	0.7	1,080,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	865	865	845	860	67,400
Ipeople Inc.	0.97	0.99	0.97	0.97	380,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.043	2,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.041	0.041	0.039	0.04	2,100,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	58,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	0.89	0.9	0.88	0.88	4,150,000
Phil Long Dis Tel Co.	990	990	970	970	270,470
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	11,800,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	15	15	14.75	15	920,600
Manila Electric Co. B	24.5	24.5	24.25	24.25	1,141,900
Petron Corp.	2.28	2.28	2.26	2.26	2,875,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.96	1	0.96	1	3,610,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.34	1.34	176,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	1,370,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	300,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	140,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.5	1.54	1.5	1.54	120,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	2,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	61,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	18.25	18.5	18.25	18.25	284,500
RFM Corp.	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66	40,000
San Miguel Corp. A	54.5	54.5	54	54.5	97,900
San Miguel Corp. B	64	64	63.5	64	146,800
Universal Robina Corp.	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	1,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	300,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32	60,000
Ayala Corp.	5.2	5.2	5.1	5.2	1,891,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.05	3.05	3.05	3.05	130,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	2,000,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	200,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.48	0.48	0.47	0.48	660,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	550,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.16	0.16	340,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	300,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.245	70,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	100,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.06	1.2	1.06	1.2	640,000
F&J Prince Holdings Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	10,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp	19	19	18.75	18.75	381,400
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	200,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	2	2.16	2	2.1	4,399,000
Medco Holdings	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	10,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	2,420,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	20,600,000
Music Corp.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	700,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.14	0.14	740,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	10,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	200,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Cen Azucar de Tarlac	3.45	3.45	3.45	3.45	2,000
Metro Alliance Hldgs B	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66	20,000
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	7.1	7.1	7	7	61,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.1	1.18	1.08	1.16	221,000
Prime Gaming Phils. Inc.	32	44	32	44	6,200
Pryce Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	400,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13	13	13	13	223,500
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.55	2,440,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.24	0.26	0.24	0.26	470,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	50,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	50,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	7,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	25	25.5	24.75	25	322,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	7.6	10.25	7.5	10.25	705,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6	6.2	6	6.1	13,404,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	200,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	30,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	100,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	20,000
Cebu Prop. Vent B	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	20,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.215	0.22	0.215	0.22	180,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.04	1.04	1.02	1.02	446,000
Highlands Prime, Inc.	2.18	2.2	2.18	2.2	350,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.155	0.17	0.155	0.17	400,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	100,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.1	2.6	2.1	2.6	1,345,000
SM Development Corp.	1.08	1.1	1.08	1.1	100,000
Sm Prime Holdings Inc.	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.5	1,478,000
Zipporah Rlty Hldgs Inc	-	-	-	-	-
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	2,000,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.5	1.8	1.5	1.8	36,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	2,630,000
Lepanto Cons Mng Co B	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	3,490,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.008	0.008	0.0075	0.0075	57,000,000
Manila Mining Corp B	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	10,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.4	0.42	0.4	0.41	1,400,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	220,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.0028	0.0028	527,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0032	0.0032	0.003	0.003	165,000,000
Pacifica	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	2,000,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	500,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.17	0.175	0.17	0.175	210,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	19,813,530	97,656,930.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	75,103,970	461,262,110.00
PRO	18,263,000	96,633,490.00
Mining	76,776,000	2,874,720.00
OIL	694,710,000	2,051,600.00
GRAND TOTALS:	884,666,500	660,478,850.00

	AVERAGES	
Bank & Fin Svc	439.07	DOWN 0.12
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,185.23	DOWN 7.48
PRO	571.35	DOWN 8.79
Mining	1,623.18	UP 4.19
OIL	1.21	DOWN 0.02
SME	100.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	874.78	UP 5.28
Composite.	1,442.37	DOWN 8.33

NO. OF ADVANCES: 32, NO. OF DECLINES: 44, NO. OF UNCHANGED: 36. NO. OF TRADED ISSUES 112, NO. OF TRADES: 1,943

Napocor to hold limited coal bids

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE NATIONAL Power Corp. has asked the Department of Justice to allow it to limit the bidding of some coal contracts to suppliers from Australia and Indonesia.

Napocor president Rogelio Murga said the limited auctions were part of the Department of Energy's efforts to diversify the power firm's coal sources.

"Contracts auctioned off through our regular biddings are usually won by Chinese suppliers. We want to get our coal from as many countries as possible," Murga said.

He explained that the DOE issued a circular last month which provided that Napocor will not get more than half of its coal requirements from a single country.

Last month, Murga said Napocor had identified Australia, South Africa and Russia as potential suppliers aside from China.

He said the company was also eyeing bigger volumes from Indonesia, which supplies the bulk of the fuel needed to power the 735-megawatt Pagbilao plant in Quezon.

Murga added that Napocor had also sounded out three of its existing Indonesian suppliers—PT Indominco, PT Arutmin and PT Jorong—for additional shipments.

The move to diversify sources also came in the wake of a possible significant cut in the volume of China's coal exports following reports that the State Council of China had directed Chinese producers to put priority on meeting local demand.

Despite this, Murga said Napocor's coal-fired power plants still had enough fuel stocks.

Coal accounts for the bulk of Napocor's power generation mix, which refers to the share of the different types of fuel in producing electricity.

RP seeks air pact with European Union

By Abigail L. Ho

THE GOVERNMENT is exploring the possibility of striking a bilateral air service agreement with the European Union instead of entering into separate pacts with each of the EU's member-states.

"A bilateral agreement between the Philippines and the EU, we're looking at that. But there's nothing concrete yet," Civil Aeronautics Board executive director Tomas Manalac said.

But the Philippine air panel, in line with its air talks prioritization efforts, had already lined up negotiations with Italy, an EU member-state, this year.

Philippine Airlines Inc. president and chief operating officer Avelino Zapanta said in a separate interview that the government should look at striking an agreement with the EU as a whole, similar to what the US government was doing.

He added that the US government, while negotiating for a bilateral agreement with the EU, should also consider giving the Philippines a similar concession—that of allowing local carriers to fly within the US.

As the EU with its 15 member-states is now taken as a single bloc, he said a US carrier flying from one state to another in the EU would mean exercising cabotage, something that PAL would like to be able to do within the US territories.

"We want cabotage, even just Guam-Honolulu or Los Angeles-San Francisco. The US and the EU are now under negotiations for cabotage. If they can give that to Europe, we should be able to get that as well," he said.

Starting Oct. 1, restrictions on flight frequencies and aircraft type for US carriers servicing Philippine routes had been lifted, following the expiration of a 1995 protocol that set these limits.

The frequency caps were put in place to allow local carriers like PAL to build up their businesses enough to be competitive with foreign airlines. The country's 1982 air transport agreement with the US did not contain restrictions on flight frequencies and aircraft type.

With the lifting of the caps, Zapanta said it would be but fair for the US to consider allowing Philippine carriers to fly inter-state within the US, even under certain restrictions.

"The only way to a fair trade in aviation is to open up the US domestic air market, in the same manner that the domestic air markets of Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa are open to everybody. That is true and real open skies," he said in an earlier interview.

"In terms of airline economics, the EU and East Asia blocs should be considered as collective groupings in themselves, comprised of several individual states—in the same manner that the USA is a collection of 50 states," he added.

The US started air service negotiations with the EU in June 2003. An agreement between them would allow US carriers to fly from one EU state to another without violating any laws. It would also allow European carriers to do the same in the US.

The EU is composed of 15 states including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Tilapia firm expands to tap US market

By Christine A. Gaylican

TGA FOODS Corp., a Pampanga-based exporter of processed tilapia (St. Peter's fish) will expand its facilities next year to increase its exports to the European Union and the United States.

TGA president Rene Tayag said the expansion program calls for the acquisition of bigger property to boost its operations out of the Clark Special Economic Zone.

He said TGA has already started talks to acquire a 100-hectare property north of Pampanga, which will be developed into an all-weather pond, thus, assuring its clients of a steady, year-round supply of tilapia.

TGA hopes to forge an agreement by the end of March this year.

"The company's goal is to increase its fish processing capacity from the current monthly average of 50 metric tons to about 250 metric tons a month by 2005," Tayag said in an interview.

Once the expansion is completed, TGA expects to improve its capability to deliver to domestic and international buyers, especially in Europe.

TGA has been operating for barely a year but has emerged as one of the country's leading exporters of processed tilapia.

Its products include fresh frozen tilapia, tilapia fillet, whole gilled-gutted and scaled tilapia, smoked tilapia and tilapia skins under the brand name "Nile Pacific."

TGA currently caters to local institutional buyers such as hotels, restaurants and other food retailers aside from exporting to the US.

Aside from expanding its facilities, TGA plans to enter into contract growing arrangements with tilapia farmers to meet the expected increase in local and foreign demand.

RP, ADB sign $200-M currency swap deal

From page B1

lending facility.

Amatong met with Hong Kong-based Javed Hamid, IFC regional director for East Asia and the Pacific before the year ended.

"IFC is exploring the possibility of doing the same thing. No amount yet," Amatong added.

In her meeting with the IFC official, Amatong said she had recommended that the IFC consider investing, lending or taking equity in small and medium enterprises.

"If they have money to invest, they must consider the SMEs which are in need of financing," she said.

BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the ADB and IFC peso lending facilities would address the currency and maturity mismatches that were major factors that led to the Asian crisis.

Tetangco said experts had discovered that two issues triggered the crisis. One was currency mismatch as local companies borrowed heavily in dollars and the other was the maturity profile, since several of the borrowings were short-term.

The ADB and the IFC are also exploring possible partnerships with banks or asset managers to help take-out the banks' bad loans and bridge the pricing gap that had dogged the sale of soured accounts and foreclosed assets, according to the central bank.

Negros Oriental group wins street dance festival

THE 100-strong street dance contingent from Negros Oriental bagged the recent street dance competition at the Quirino Grandstand, besting 14 other dance troupes from Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao.

It was tough competition but the Negros Oriental group won with its performance of the "Yag-yag Festival" before some 30,000 spectators that gathered at the Luneta to watch the colorful event.

The dance festival competition capped the Department of Tourism's Visit Philippine 2003 campaign.

Negros Oriental's "Yag-yag Festival" won the P1-million grand prize after it was adjudged the "Best of the Best Street Dance."

Leyte's "Los Pintados Festival" came in second, winning P500,000, while North Cotabato's "Kadagayaan Festival" bagged third place with P250,000.

"We wanted the Visit Philippines 2003 campaign to end with a resounding bang through a series of activities that is truly Filipino and showcasing the best of our country's cultural and historical heritage with the walled city of Intramuros as our centerpiece attraction," said Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon.

The winner in the dance competition was inspired by *pag-yag-yag*, a Visayan word referring to the spawning process of thousands of land crabs, which the Negros Oriental group interpreted with dance movements characteristic of land crabs during such stage in their lives.

Incorporated in the dance interpretation are truly Filipino traits such as unity, solidarity, heroism and self-sacrifice.

Gordon praised all the participating contingents, saying "the festival showcased the many magnificent facets of the country's cultural heritage, especially in the performing arts."

"They are all winners to me," said the Tourism chief of the 15 participating groups.

Runner-up "Los Pintados Festival" depicted the story of the practice of early Filipinos of tattooing another man's body to depict his bravery, courage as well as his status in society.

It also accounts for the stories of men whom Magellan called *pintados* upon his arrival in Leyte in 1521.

Third-placer Kadagayaan Festival offered a feast of merrymaking and thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest, highlighted by loud music, songs and riveting dance moves.

Other culminating tourism events of Visit Philippines 2003 include the "WOW Pagkaing Pilipino!" "WOW Inuming Pinoy!" "WOW Himig · Pilpino!" and WOW Kasuotang Pilipino!" all slated within the walled city of Intramuros.

The WOW Himig Pilipino! also brought together 15 of the country's most powerful choral groups, with Iloilo City's University of San Agustin Troubadours capturing the competition's top plum along with the P200,000 cash prize.

Second- and third-placers Saint Louis University of Baguio and Capitol Glee Club of Cagayan de Oro got P150,000 and P100,000, respectively.

Soriano elected Ecop prexy for 2004

THE EMPLOYERS Confederation of the Philippines (Ecop) has a new president in the person of lawyer Rene Y. Soriano. He was elected during the recent Ecop general membership meeting and has assumed the mantle of leadership of the biggest employers' group in the country since Jan 1.

Soriano is chair and member of the board of several corporations and is involved in the services, pharmaceutical, manufacturing and trading industries. He also served as president of the Personnel Management Association of the Philippines in 1991, and has assumed top positions in other professional and civic organizations.

Soriano graduated from the UP College of Law in 1971 and, at present, is a senior partner, a member of the executive committee and head of the human resources practice group of Sycip Salazar Hernandez and Gatmaitan-the biggest and most prestigious law firm in the country.

Soriano has served in various Ecop positions before his election as president. He was vice president from 1996 onwards, and chaired various Ecop committees since 1985.

CAMPBELL'S TOUR VISITS SAN AGUSTIN

Students from Colegio de San Agustin were in for a delicious treat when Campbell's Chef on Campus Tour visited their school last Nov. 5. The students underwent a one-day cooking program where they learned the basics on cooking using Campbell's soup. Present to congratulate the students on the sumptuous dishes prepared were Joe Folds, vice president-Asia of Campbell Soup and Melissa Sison, guest chef and owner of My Little Kitchen. The program aimed to encourage high school students to use Campbell's soup not just as soup but also as an ingredient to make everyday dishes more tasty and exciting. Furthermore, Campbell's Chef on Campus hopes that the students share what they have learned from the program with their families, and eventually make Campbell's soup a part of their daily meals.

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MOA SIGNING FOR THE TQ3 MARINE VISA CARD

Shown in photo are (from left) Virginia Balagtas, EVP and CEO of TQ3 Travel Solutions Phils; Annie Umali, general manager of AIG Credit Card Company Phils; Jose Antonio Romulo, country business manager of Visa International; and Angelito Villanueva, vice president and chief operating officer of TQ3 Travel Solutions Phils. Through the collaborative efforts of the companies involved, the TQ3 Marine Visa Card aims to provide the seafarers and professionals a unique and distinct offer of financial flexibility and investment opportunities. With the TQ3 Marine Visa Card, the seafarers and their family members can now experience the benefits and convenience of a credit card and earn on their investments at the same time.

CPA TOPNOTCHERS, P&A'S NEWLY HIRED AUDITORS

CPA topnotchers among the newly hired auditors of Punongbayan &Araullo were honored at the public accounting firm's general staff meeting recently. Shown are (from left) Roderick Percha (13th place), Lily Linsangan, head of P&A's audit & assurance division, Sheryl Lopez (8th), and Mark Jason Cagalingan (17th). Not in photo are Ronan Joseph Isla (6th) and Racquel Cuizon (19th) of P&A's Cebu office. P&A, the Philippines third largest CPA firm is a member of Grant Thornton International, one of the world's leading organizations of accounting and consulting firms.

Awardi of Cer icate of Compli

FCVC RECEIVES CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE FROM ERC

First Cabanatuan Ventures Corp (FCVC) chair Rosanna Vergara is all smiles as she receives FCVC's Certificate of Compliance (COC) from Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) chair Manuel Sanchez during simple rites at the ERC head office in Pasig City recently. COCs are issued to Independent Power Producers (IPPs) that meet the government's electricity generation and operation requirements as provided for under Republic Act No. 9136 aka the Electric Power Industry Reform Act. Thus far, 41 IPPs have been awarded COCs since the act was enacted in 2001. Also in photo are (from right) ERC Commissioner Leticia Ibay, ERC market operations service director Edgar Samonte and ERC staff member Elaine Galapon.

Bankard offers better-than-0% deal to cardholders

JUST when you think paying zero percent interest for installment purchases is a good deal, Bankard comes up with an even-better-than-0 percent deal - the "Select-A-Package" installment promo.

This Christmas, Bankard is giving its cardholders the chance to gift themselves and their loved ones with their dream appliances, computers and a wide-selection of living room, bedroom and kitchen showcases at better-than-0 percent installment rates.

Dubbed Select-A-Package, the installment promo runs until January 31, 2004, during which specially-bundled installment packages will be made available to active cardholders of Bankard MasterCard, Bankard Visa and Bankard JCB at extremely reasonable installment rates that are even better than the 0 percent deals being offered by other credit card brands.

Cardholders can also create their own bundles made up of the items they have long wanted to purchase just by dropping by any of the participating merchant establishments which include Metro Manila branches of Automatic Center, Villman Computers, Fifth Avenue, and Sony-Avid. All they have to do is present their Bankard credit cards and choose from 3,6,9, 12 up to 36 easy monthly installment payments. They will not be required to fill out any forms. All they need is their Bankard credit card.

To see all the items included in the bundles, simply visit any of the participating merchant establishments or call Bankard Customer Service at 888-1-888 for more information.

The ABC's of food nutrition

EATING takes up a large part of our life. Most of us eat thrice a day, sometimes even more if you count the occasional midnight snack and merienda. But despite all the time we spend preparing, looking for and eating food, its surprising how many of us don't even know that what we eat affects our body. Since we eat to sustain life, we have a responsibility towards our body to understand what it needs. This will help us feed ourselves better, which will result in better health.

The ABC's or the basics of nutrition start with the food pyramid. These are foods grouped together according to their nutritional value. Arranged according to importance, the tip of the pyramids is made up of the food the body only needs in small amounts - namely fats, oils and sweets, which we should eat sparingly.

Underneath the tip of the dairy are the dairy (milk, yogurt, cheese etc.) and protein-rich (meat, poultry, fish) food groups. The succeeding levels are composed of the two most important food groups. The vegetables and fruits group, followed by the pasta, rice, cereal and bread groups.

The reason why the latter food groups are the most important is because they provide the body with the two types of nutrients it basically needs to function properly: micronutrients and macronutrients. Micronutrients are something we hear about all the time; these are the different vitamins and minerals needed by the body to function optimally, and these can be found in fruits and vegetables.

Macronutrients are called "macro" because we need them in large amounts. Macronutrients refer to the body's three sources of fuel: carbohydrates, proteins and fats. Our body's store of carbohydrates is quickly depleted because this is the most important source energy. This explains why carbohydrate-rich food forms the bottom of the pyramid; this group should make up the biggest part of what you eat throughout the day. bread, cereal, rice and pasta are all great sources of energy. So if you need lots of energy, be sure to hit the bottom of the pyramid.

Carbohydrates aren't the only nutrients one can get from this food group, 8 vitamins and iron are an added plus. In fact, carbohydrates are so important that the food pyramid suggests you eat 6 to 11 servings from this group each day. This is a simple rule many Filipinos are not aware of. Indeed except for protein, the typical Filipino diet was found to be alarmingly lacking in energy-giving macronutrients and other nutrients.

In order to compensate for the inadequate energy intake, the body us forced to use protein as main energy source which, when it occurs continuously, can lead to illness.

With this in mind, the way to avoid this would be to consciously replenish the body's supply of carbohydrates - if one carbohydrates-rich food isn't on hand, you can substitute it with another quite easily - instant noodles, for example, can be a better alternative to a rice meal especially when you're hungry but on the go (in countries like Japan and Korea, instant noodles are almost a staple food for people-on-the-go. In 2001, their per capita annual consumption was about 5.5 kg as opposed to 0.57 kg in the Philippines).

Instant noodles are quick and easy to prepare. They are also easy to carry around if you're traveling. Choose brands that are fortified with other vitamins and minerals.

If you must give in to a snack or you're in too much of a rush to prepare a rice-meal, avoid temptation of eating junk or rich fast and go for something filling and carbohydrate-rich like instant noodles.

Knowing the basics of nutrition can help you improvise what you eat and still help you stay healthy. You'll avoid the mistake of not giving your body the energy and nutrients it needs.

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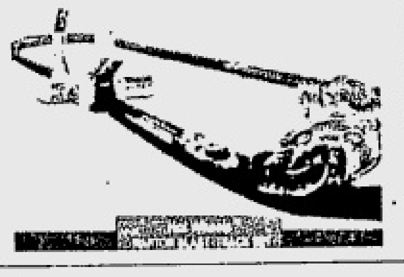
HOT WHEELS, the leader in die-cast toy cars introduces one of its newest products, The Raptor Blast. The Raptor Blast tack set comes complete with a die-cast toy car and is very easy to assemble. It also interconnects with other exciting track sets like the Octoblast, Starter set and a whole lot more. So the more track sets you buy, the bigger your set will be. Got what it takes to beat the Raptor? Throw your car in the loop so you gain speed, and when you think your ready, release your car to try to make a pass on that mean-looking Raptor on the other end. So head on now to the stores, as the Raptor Blast from Hot Wheels is now available. Hot Wheels is exclusively distributed by Richwell Trading Corp, #25 Richwell Building, Quezon Avenue, Quezon City. Email at mktg@richwell.net or call 732-5141 to 47.



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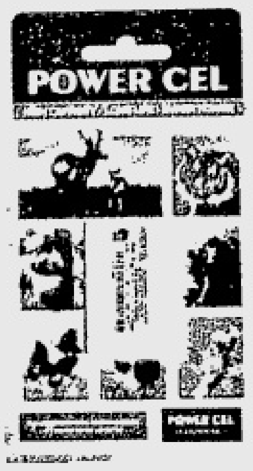

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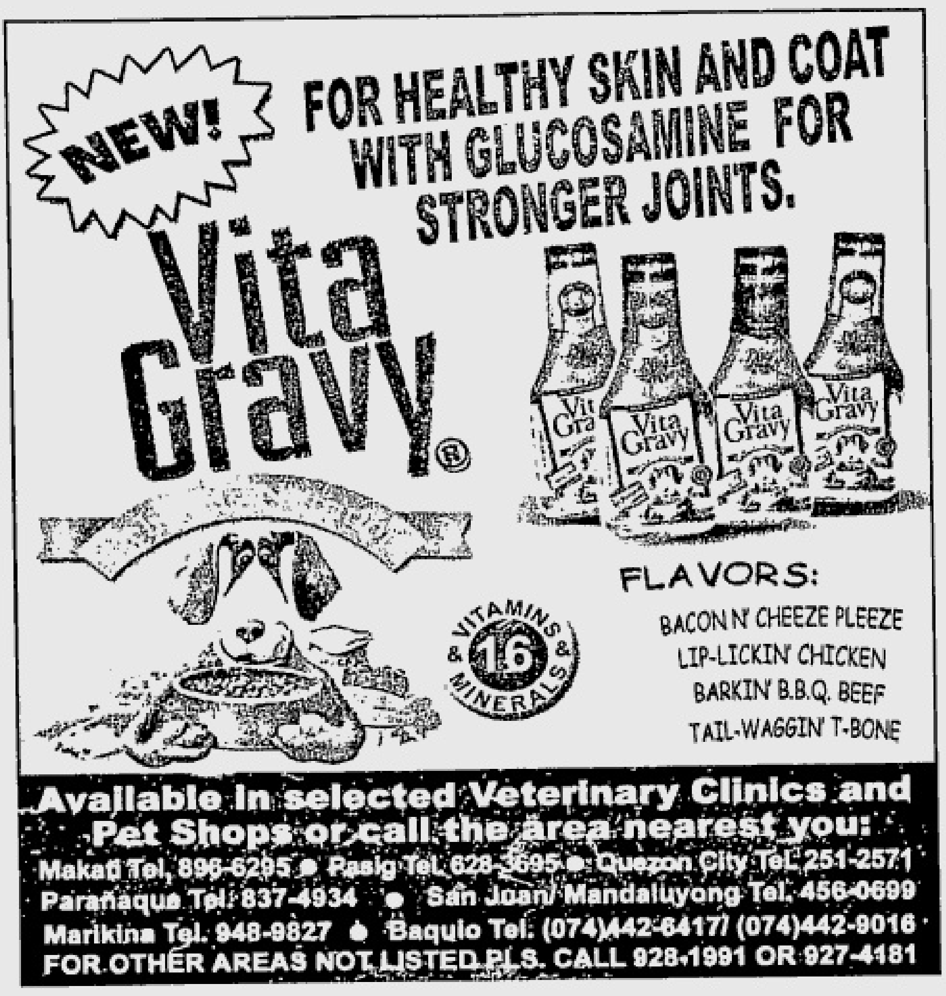
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NOTICE

Please get in touch with the Members Assistance Center, Social Security System (SSS), East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City or at any SSS office nearest your place of residence and file your death benefit claim within 90 days upon publication, if you are:

	NAME OF BENEFICIARIES	LAST KNOWN ADDRESS	NAME OF SSS MEMBER	DATE OF DEMISE
1)	Felirosa R. Beatingo Francis Dave R. Beatingo Earoll John R. Beatingo	A-9 Sauyo Road, Novaliches, Q.C. 1478 Uli-uli St., San Miguel, Malacañang Poblacion Binalbagan, Negros Occidental	Elmer R. Beatingo SS # 03-6881932-8	February 26, 2003
2)	Rodolfo Bulco	Unknown	Esperanza Bulco SS # 03-8584416-9	September 26, 2003
3)	Norma W. Labslida	Unknown	Cesario C. Calago SS # 06-0309978-0	September 9, 2000
4)	Edralyn	San Pedro National Hi-way, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan	Diego M. Dejaro Jr. SS # 07-0877027-6	October 9, 2002
5)	Angelika Dela Peña	Mindoro	Jose Dela Peña SS # 03-4277713-0	September 10, 2003
6)	Luisa B. Dulman, Arnulfo & Arnold	Cebu	Arnulfo A. Dulman SS # 07-0345037-1	May 2, 2003
7)	Clarito Egloso	Unknown	Clarito P. Egloso Jr. SS # 04-3483233-6	January 13, 2003
8)	Brenda Lanaban Evangelio Melita Lanaban Evangelio	Unknown	Lucenio T. Evangelio SS # 08-0451371-9	May 18, 2003
9)	Siony & Children	Gumaca, Quezon	Edilberto V. Garcia SS # 04-0516775-5	January 7, 2003
10)	Vivian Grace Gazmin	Gerona, Tarlac	Domingo L. Gazmin SS # 02-0200161-6	May 5, 2003
11)	Marilou Canoy	Iligan City	Aniceto Lada SS # 09-0636415-4	July 3, 1999
12)	Epifania Atienza	Unknown	Rene Maac SS # 06-2478428-0	July 21, 2002
13)	Elizabeth Evangelista Manalo	San Pablo City	Emilio Bautista Manalo SS # 04-0306654-4	July 12, 2003
14)	Rosa Mangipay	Talubin, Bunlok Mountain Province	Benedicto Mangipay SS # 09-0766873-6	September 7, 2003
15)	Corazon Abundo	Unknown	Antonio T. Masula SS # 03-0629821-5	August 4, 2001
16)	Araceli Labayo Mitiam	Bangkal, Meycauayan, Bulacan	Fidel R. Mitiam SS # 03-0682662-9	October 29, 2003
17)	Lolita Go	Caramcam, Mangagoy, Bislig City, Surigao	Feliciano E. Olavides SS # 09-0542078-5	May 28, 2002
18)	Marites Tabinas	Unknown	Rodolfo P. Ong SS # 08-0301794-4	October 8, 1999
19)	Moralita Lomagod	Butuan City	Domingo M. Quizona SS # 08-3097111-9	June 14, 2003
20)	Maxima Bustillo, Winefreda & Milagros Ramelo	59 Bayanbayanan, Malabon, Rizal	Domingo G. Ramelo SS # 03-1321676-9	May 11, 2003
21)	Mariam, Rasid & Paladan	Kolambugan, Lanao del Norte	Panglima Ramos SS # 08-0076650-2 08-0109530-8	April 17, 2001
22)	Cecilia Cruz	Pililla, Rizal	Efren Recto SS # 03-1678623-8	September 14, 2003
23)	Tanya Gomez, Jhon Evan Dominique Regala	Unknown	Steve Regala SS # 01-0185733-0	September 10, 2003
24)	Benedicta Relente	Calumbangan, Tabango, Leyte	Numeriano Relente SS # 06-0371344-8	July 24, 2003
25)	Marilen Reyes	Unknown	Gomer Z. Reyes SS # 03-3059929-4	December 29, 2001
26)	Araceli B. Reyes	22-C Mambajao, Mandaluyong City	Hector Reyes SS # 03-0961623-4	July 7, 2003
27)	Celia Santos	68 Daan Tubo, U.P. Balara	Enrico Santos SS # 03-3889939-3	June 21, 2002
28)	Lourdes Molina	San Miguel, Iriga City	Edito Tabayag, Sr. SS # 05-0072397-1	July 26, 2003
29)	Yolanda Tagarao	Unknown	Raymundo Tagarao SS # 04-0412452-4	July 16, 2003
30)	Segundino Ursal	Unknown	Jose Robert A. Ursal SS # 09-1386626-9	June 29, 2002

(PDI - Jan. 3, 2004)

Office of the President
Republic of the Philippines
CLARK DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Clark Special Economic Zone, Pampanga

REVISED REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Clark Development Corporation (CDC) invites interested investors for the:

"PRIVATIZATION OF THE FORMER MIMOSA RESORT ESTATE"

The privatization project intends to seek investors and/or locators who will operate the existing facilities and improvements of the multi-million former Mimosa Resort Estate and further develop it into a prime tourist and recreational destination in Central Luzon for a period of 25 years.

Interested parties are required to present their Letter of Intent (LOI) upon purchase of the eligibility forms and submit their eligibility documents not later than **January 19, 2004** (9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. at the Office of the SBAC Chairman, Bldg. 2127 C.P. Garcia Street corner E. Quirino Ave., CSEZ, Pampanga.

Eligibility Forms will be issued to the prospective bidder upon payment of a non-refundable fee of TWENTY THOUSAND PESOS (P20,000.00). The said payment shall cover all the bidding documents including the Eligibility Forms, TOR and other documents. Issuance of the Eligibility Forms shall commence on **January 03 to 12, 2004** (9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.).

Only those who are eligible to bid for the said project shall be issued a TOR and shall be invited to participate and be notified of the schedule of pre-bid conference and the submission and opening of bids thru the issuance of bid bulletins.

CDC reserves the right to reject any or all applications or bids without offering any reason; to waive any formality, informality and/or defect and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government. CDC does not guarantee that an award will be made.

All inquiries and letters shall be addressed to:

**SPECIAL BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
c/o VICTOR JOSE I. LUCIANO, CHAIRMAN
Clark Development Corporation
Bldg. 2127, E. Quirino Avenue corner
C.P. Garcia Street, CSEZ
Clark Field, Pampanga**

(Sgd.) **VICTOR JOSE I. LUCIANO**
SBAC Chairman

(PDI–Dec. 27, 2003 & Jan. 3, 2004)

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ATTY. NARCISO GAMBOA BELASA

now peacefully rests in the Grace and Goodness
of our Lord on January 1, 2004
at the age of 72.

His loving wife **Erlinda Villacorta**; children **Ging** and **Teddy Camantigue**, **Emma** and **Bernie Ochosa**, **Narciso Jr.** and **Jenneth**; his grandchildren **Justine** and **Jaco** and relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Marian Memorial Chapels, #017 Marcos Highway, Antipolo City.

Interment will be at Paraiso Memorial Park, San Mateo Rizal on Tuesday, January 6, 2004 after the 9:00A.M. Mass.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

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INQUIRER OBITUARIES

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❶ Copy of Death Certificate
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• DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT • MESSAGE OF THANKS • DEATH ANNIVERSARY • REQUIEMS

NECOLITO SALCEDO DUTERTE

of Cagayan de Oro City

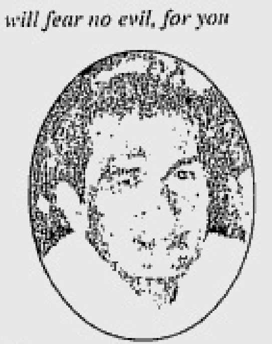
Peacefully joined his Creator
on December 31, 2003 at the age of 57.

His wife **Auring**; loving children **Ann-Ann**, **John Paul**, **Nikko** and **Junjie**; his brothers **Reynaldo** & Dory, **Manny** & Cora, **Dodong** & Irma, **Arnold** & Alice; his sister **Myrna** & Nick Labadan; in-laws, nephews and nieces request the pious readers to pray for his eternal rest.

His body lies at Villa RIA, Cugman, Cagayan de Oro City.

Interment will be on Sunday, January 4, 2004 at the Greenhills Memorial Gardens after the 11:00 a.m. Mass.

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for you are with me; Your rod and your staff comfort me..."
Psalm 23:4



Our Dearly Beloved Dad

Atty. Rodolfo A. Serafica

Retired Legal Practitioner
Retired Senior Legal Officer, City of Manila.
During the Administration of Mayor A. Villegas
Rollista, Cursillos in Christianity

Peacefully joined his God and Creator on January 1, 2004 at the age of 80.

His loving wife **Maria Nena**; children **Leo** (deceased) & **Bernadette**, **Agnes** & **Ricardo**, **Emmy** & **Lydia**, **Carlos** & **Cynthia**, and **Ojie** & **Enony**.

Grandchildren: **Bernadette**, **Clarizza**, **Patrick**, **Richard**, **Roderick**, **Annavi**, **John**, **Claire**, **Jennifer**, **Carlos**, **Michelle**, **Jandrew**, **Joshua** and **Jonathan**; great grandchildren, surviving sister, relatives and friends, request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Marian Memorial Chapels, Marcos Highway, Antipolo City.

Interment will be at Himlayang Pilipino Memorial Park, Quezon City on January 6, 2004 after the 8:00 a.m. Mass.

Dad
Your Love & Sacrifices will not be Forgotten

"Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, Or what's a Heaven for?" Robert Browning

IN MEMORIAM

DOLORES MARQUEZ CARBALLO

of Lucena, Quezon and San Juan, Metro Manila
April 2, 1909 – January 1, 2004

Her bereaved daughter **Bibsy M. Carballo**; surviving brothers **Gregorio Marquez** and **Dr. Carlos Marquez**; (†) **Manuel**, **Ramon**, **Jose**; (†) sisters **Socorro Marquez Zaballero**, **Paz Marquez Benitez**, **Concepcion Marquez Gil**, **Natividad Marquez**, **Isabel Marquez**, **Carolina Marquez Olivera**; nieces, nephews and other relatives and friends request for prayers for her soul's serene journey to Heaven.

Her remains lie in state at St. John's Academy Chapel, 148 Jose Gil St., San Juan, Metro Manila.

Masses will be held at the St. John's Chapel, Saturday, January 3, and Sunday, January 4 at 6 p.m.

Interment will follow the Sunday Mass at the Pinaglabanan Parish Crypt, San Juan.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow all the day of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." - **Psalm 23:6**

ESNAR A. GATDULA

Peacefully joined his Creator on January 2, 2004 at the age of 71.

His loving wife **MILA**; children **ARNOLD**, **HENRY** and **LISA**; daughters-in-law **LEAH** and **JHONNA**; grandchildren **LYMO**, **ASHLEY** and **JACOB**; brother and sisters, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the family residence at 192 Guballa St., Road 2 Balasing, Kilometer 38, Pulong Buhangin, Sta. Maria, Bulacan.

Interment details may be inquired from Arnold Gatdula at 0917-8141193 or Lisa Gatdula at 0917-6071803.

Our Dearly Beloved Tatay

ATTY. VICTORIANO S. TORRES

Retired Registrar of Deeds
Cavite City and Pasay City
Died in the Grace of our Lord
on December 30, 2003
at the age of 75.

His loving wife **MAMERTA**; children **VICTOR** & **RITA**, **ARTHUR** & **NORMIE**, **PEPITO** & **LILIAN**, **MARITA** & **JUN**; grandchildren **PAOLO**, **ARVIN**, **CARLO**, **JHOLO**, **KENNETH**, **CHRISTINE**, **APPLE**, **TRISHA** and **BIANCA** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in the family residence at 112 Aniban, Bacoor, Cavite.

Interment will be on Wednesday, January 7, 2004, 2:00 P.M. at Silangan Memorial Garden, Ligas, Bacoor, Cavite.

"For God so loved the World, that He gave us His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have Everlasting life." —John 3:16

People, Events & Products

E-mail: pr_pep@inquirer.com.ph
aespinosa@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Aries Espinosa

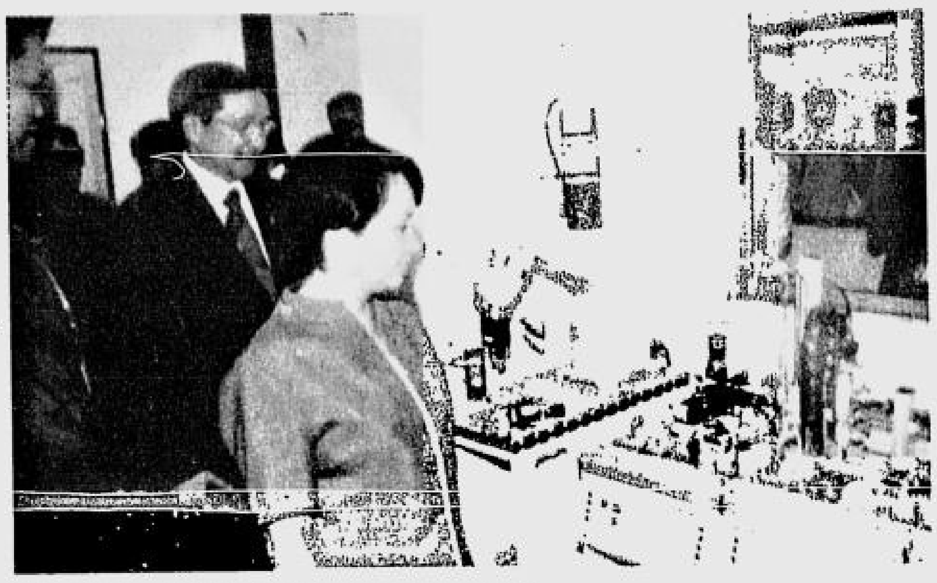
Sharp receives Philippines' first international quality award

SHARP (Phils) Corp, a leading manufacturer of quality audio, visual and home appliance products, was recently awarded with the Quality Summit (New York 2003) Gold Award for Excellence and Business Prestige. The award was given "in recognition of Sharp's continuous search for quality demonstrated by the achievement of ongoing development and innovation applied to solutions which create business results" as stated in the accompanying certificate.

Sharp becomes the first company in the Philippines to receive this recognition organized by the Business Initiative Directions (BID), a prestigious independent organization based in Madrid, Spain that promotes the QC100 Total Quality Management model for over thirty years now in 166 countries. The selection criteria includes adherence to this model, a sophisticated management tool made up of 100 points that add creativity to TQM guidelines such as knowing the meaning of corporate results, management and production systems, ongoing training, planning and decision-making excellence all the way to commitment to leadership and customer satisfaction.

With the award, Sharp reinforces its focus on quality as a factor of development to become more competitive. This led to a declaration of commitment signed by SPC president and general manager Mitsunobu Hattori to publicize this quality culture with employees, suppliers, clients and community according to the following principles: 1. That quality is a consequence of valuing customer satisfaction; 2. Meeting internal quality levels according to the QC100 Points of Quality; 3. Encourage participation and teamwork for decision making; 4. Satisfying needs of clients and meeting their expectations; 5. Providing human resources to achieve continuous improvement and respect for the environment; 6. Managing human resources to achieve maximum potential; and 7. Employee awareness on concentrating on the most profitable areas of activity to achieve the best business results.

In its dedication to continuous improvement, Sharp Phils remains aggressive in promoting quality and environment management systems within the company. As early as 1993, Sharp was the first in its industry to receive the ISO-9002 certification from the British Standards Institute (BSI) for quality management systems. It also received its ISO-14001 certification in 2000, also from the BSI. Sharp continues to advocate quality and environmental management activities through its quality circles and is continually educating nearby communities on environmental issues.



GMA VISITS AMA'S MECHATRONICS LAB

AMA, the pioneer and largest IT based educational provider in Asia, recently marked its 23rd foundation day at its University Campus in Quezon City with President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo praising the entire AMA Education System for having significantly contributed to the building of a large group of knowledge workers vital to Philippine competitiveness in the global and knowledge-based economy of the 21st century. The country's chief executive spoke before 10,000 students with the ceremonies transmitted live via Internet Webcast enabling all the systems' 150,000 throughout the Philippines and the world to log on to the coverage. Photo shows President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo touring the AMA Computer University mechatronics lab being used by all students enrolled in the AMA Robotics Program with Dr. Amable Aguiluz V showing the state of the art Modular Production System.

THE MYSTERIOUS 'PULSE DANCE'

Manila is not exactly the dance capital of the world. But it's close. The way dance crazes find its way very much at home in Manila's dance clubs and street parties, it could very well be. Not surprisingly, a new dance has been hitting Metro Manila in recent weeks. What's surprising is the mystery that surrounds it. The new dance has been infiltrating the scene in stealth mode, silently infecting unsuspecting people on the streets and in the malls, and select club goers all over the city. It certainly has all the pulse of a craze. In fact, many have coined a name for this mysterious interruption – "The Pulse Dance" – making things more cryptic than ever. Question is, where did it come from? What is it all about? And what is it all leading up to? For now, everything is a big, infectious mystery.

Public safety program of Meralco intensified

MERALCO has reinstated its campaign on public safety to aggressively increase public consciousness on the need for safety precautions most especially when working near electric line facilities. The power service company identified the cooperation of building officials, city/municipality engineers, private electricians and contractors as a critical element in its public safety campaign.

"The help that will be provided by the building officials are indispensable to the success of Meralco's program on public safety," said Meralco's corporate safety head Fred Ramos.

"We need the assistance of these officials that is why we are currently conducting dialogues with them," Ramos added.

So far the power firm has visited several building officials in several cities and municipalities in Metro Manila, namely Taguig, Quezon City, Makati, San Juan, and Mandaluyong.

Meralco vice president for corporate communications Elpi Cuna said that Meralco's safety campaign has always been a priority program of the company. He said that there is really a need to make the public aware that safety is a paramount concern.

"Every effort is being made to ensure that safety and general well being of the public are enhanced by Meralco's products and services", Cuna said.

CAPRICCIO NOW AT ROCKWELL

Capriccio is now showcasing 50 unique and elegant designs of high quality wedding rings and engagement rings at Themes & Motifs, 2nd level Lifestyle Section, The Powerplant Mall, Rockwell, Makati City. Daily from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m., the gallery features world class rings designed by Marisse Ramirez Gonzales. Capriccio rings collection use only the clearest diamond from DeBeers, the finest gold from Switzerland and the most premium alloy from Degussa, Germany. Capriccio Rings are certified to bring customer satisfaction with guaranteed after-sales care and personalized professional service by jewelry consultants Merilyn Siga-an and Myrna Casarino.

WESTERN UNION REMITTANCE SERVICES AVAILABLE AT SUREX

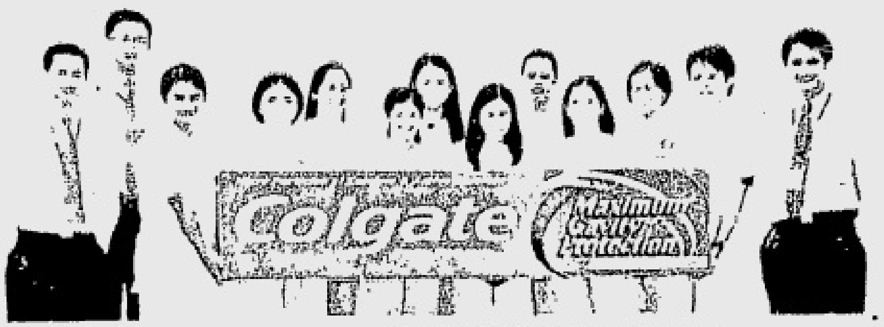
eBiz, the first Asia pacific direct agent of Western Union has just recently signed up Surex as its newest sub-agent last July 7 at the Discovery Suites. Sruex is the sole distributor of United Postal Services and has about 25 branches here in the Philippines. Partnership is signed in the presence of eBiz and Surex representatives. They are (from left) Ronald Pili (network officer), Henry Tsai (president, Surex), Al Tady (general manager, eBiz), Albert Ang (general manager, Surex), Evelyn Singson (president, eBiz), Rachel Cabalde (chief network officer, eBiz) and Joel Talosig (chief marketing officer, eBiz).

Infostructure is 11

INFOSTRUCTURE marks its 11th year in innovating enterprise software solutions on Jan. 6 and will celebrate it at its annual event dubbed "Infostructure Sphere 2003" in Shangri-La Hotel in Makati on March 27. In this event, co-sponsored by Oracle Philippines, Infostructure will showcase its latest innovation called Infostructure.NJ, a new-age enterprise computing technology. With Infostructure.NJ, companies can practically build their own infostructure system with minimal investment since it can be set up in an inexpensive network of Linux server and desktops using free software components downloaded from the Internet such as Jboss, an application server, and Postgress, an SQL database server. For inquiries, call 892-3325 or 893-8865, or e-mail oliviagracealvaran@eenterprise.net.

WILTSCHEK CAPTURES TITLE

German national Rolf Wiltschek captured the 2003 Shell Advance superbike series championship at the Batangas Racing Circuit. Wiltschek showed his impressive performance by consistently finishing in the podium at the end of every race, thus earning the title '2003 Novice Champion'. Wiltschek garnered a total of 243 points, followed by closest rival Miguel Bichara of team Aprilia/Ultra Bykes Network. Bichara riding a 1000cc Aprilia superbike was 2nd overall with 209 points. Coming in 3rd with 170 points was Julian Goitia of team Petron-Pegasus. Wiltschek, Bichara, Goitia and Nikki Romero will all be upgraded to the Expert Class Division in the 2004 Shell Advanced Superbike series. These are the only 4 riders in the novice division that have passed the lap requirement of 1:50.00 making them eligible to race against the experts in 2004. Race was sanctioned by Namssa-FIM. In photo (from left) are the top 3 contenders, Miguel Bichara, Rolf Wiltschek and Julian Goitia.



COLGATE CONGRATULATES 2003 DENTISTRY SCHOLARS

Ten dentistry students are all smiles as they received their scholarship from the Colgate Dental School Program. The program aims to support deserving future dentists studying in various dental universities in the country. Aside from the scholarship grant, the Colgate Dental School Program also provides support to the scholars' respective universities' dentistry department. Initiated in 2001, the program has already supported 19 dentistry scholars to date. Through the Dental School Program, Colgate demonstrates a long-term commitment to the development of the dental profession. For 2004 you can be a part of this too. Talk to your respective schools about the Colgate Dental School Program. Shown are (from left) Dr. Wendell Ong (oral care consultant, Colgate Palmolive Phils Inc), Dr. Eric Co (professional relations manager, Colgate Palmolive Phils Inc), Randolf Jornadon (De Ocampo Memorial College), Amber Castillo (Lyceum of Batangas), Jeanette Fariñas (Unciano College), Lanie Alberca (Emilio Aguinaldo Colleges), Ma. Cynthia Salvador (Our Lady of Fatima University), Mylene Trinidad (University of Perpetual Help), Alvin Carreon (Centro Escolar University), Hazel Ferrer (University of the East), Pauline Marie Abayon (University of the Philippines), Warren Talag (Manila Central University), Dr. Angel David II (oral care consultant, Colgate Palmolive Phils Inc).

PACIFIC INTERNET DONATES TO UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN

Pacific Internet Phils, foremost Internet Service Provider in the country has offered its support to GMA 7's Kapuso Foundation by donating P1 for every purchase of Pacific Internet E-Volve or Surf Maxx internet prepaid card. The company formally pledged its support to the foundation during the launch of Give-A-Gift, the foundation's Christmas project to bring cheer to underprivileged and cancer-stricken children, last Oct. 28. Pacific Internet E-Volve and Surf Maxx cards are available at all SM branches, major computer shops and other leading retail outlets. For more information, you may call their customer service hotline at 918-5011 for E-Volve, or 918-0533, 918-0320 and 918-0357 for Surf Maxx. Shown is Pacific Internet VP for sales and marketing Sonny Divina as he holds a replica of the E-Volve prepaid internet card which for every purchase gives P1 to the GMA 7 Kapuso Foundation's Give-A-Gift for underprivileged children and cancer-stricken Filipino children.

Fiesta time at Greenhills

FILIPINOS love festivals and other exciting events where they dance, sing and play. The Quiapo fiesta on Jan. 9, where the miraculous Black Nazarene is the center of attraction, is one such festival that attracts local and foreign tourists and the religious. On the same day, the 2nd Philippine Fiesta Fair will open at the Greenhills Shopping Complex in San Juan. Here, see and feel how fiestas are being celebrated in the Philippines. Thus, Greenhills should be included in the itinerary of tourists and foreign visitors who are curious as to how Filipinos celebrate and where to buy high quality Philippine products. Ongoing until Feb. 1, the 2nd Philippine Fiesta Fair lets visitors feel the fiesta atmosphere. The trade fair is organized by Prime Asia Trade Planners & Convention Organizers (Patepco), a leading trade fairs and consumer exhibits organizer for 18 years. For more inquiries, call Patepco's Ariel Villanueva, overall coordinator, Jun Reyes, office manager or Nora Babiera, or project coordinators Ai-Ai Babiera, Albert Castro, Celina Umali or Beth Bustillo at the Blue Men's, at 820-3862, 826-6732 or 829-3195.

grow
in celebration

PARTNERS IN GROWTH, FRIENDS IN CELEBRATION

Fundador has tied up with the Philippine Jaycees Senate in a project dubbed 'Partners in growth, friends in celebration'. The partnership aims to promote the similarities and close ties between the value systems of the two parties. Fundador is the number one imported Spanish brandy in the Philippines while the Philippine Jaycees Senate is the country's most prestigious and respected civic organization. Present during the forging of partnership were (from left) Gino Baltao, PJS anniversary chair; Sergio Valencia, PJS national president; Anthony Daintry, Allied Domecq managing director and Paul Francisco, Allied Domecq finance controller.

Bookware launches MSV Classics Illustrated

GOOD news to pocketbook lovers, this week, Bookware Publishing Corp is launching My Special Valentine (MSV) Classic Illustrated, a label of Filipino romance novels with exciting artworks. Made possible by a young breed of writers and artists, it is undoubtedly an innovation in the reading entertainment industry. Each story features photo-like characters that could easily capture the imagination of everyone.

"This is the answer to the demand of our regular patrons," says Manny Echevarria of Bookware, "that we come out with something that others don't have. We did a lot of researches and other preparations to make it happen. And the company is happy to announce that the result is considerably trendsetting. To MSV readers, this is definitely for you. You deserve the best in your quality leisure time."

The first set of MSV Classics Illustrated includes: "My First Love", "Pangako ng Puso Ko", "Kung Sino Pa Ang Minahal", "Hawak Mo Ang Puso Ko", "Falling In Love With You", Pigilan Mo Man Ang Puso", "Be My Love", "Through the Years", "Papa's Girl Ka Pala", "I Will Do Anything For You", "Why Do I Love You", and "I'm Glad I Found You."

Incidentally, the recent monthly winner of the ongoing "Nokia 3650 raffle promo" is Wanda Ocampo of Makati City. For inquiries, call 631-8893 to 94.

Mad cow strikes fear, again

By Charles E. Buban

LAST week, a number of nations including Japan, South Korea, Australia, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Russia, Mexico and China banned US beef imports after a cow in a Washington state farm tested positive for mad cow disease.

The Philippines blocked the importation of some US beef products but has not imposed a blanket ban.

This is not the first time the country has raised an alert over mad cow disease. Four years ago, the Department of Agriculture imposed an import ban on feeds, meat and meat products, milk and dairy products, eggs, and processed food containing such products from four European countries whose products were suspected of carrying the dreaded disease.

Then in 2001, in reaction to the outbreak raging in Europe, the Department of Health enforced a tight watch to prevent contaminated meat from entering the country.

These outbreaks have led to large declines in beef consumption in the past, and is threatening to happen once again.

Beef consumption still normal

Based from feedback from various meat retailers interviewed by the INQUIRER, the selective ban has not yet affected the country's beef supply or the price of the beef.

"Demand for beef remained strong during the holidays, and we hope this will go on despite the alert," said Lea Atienza, who has been selling beef since 1983 at the New Antipolo Market in Blumentritt, Manila. "Our meat is quite safe from contamination since we get our beef from Dealco Farm which gets its supply from Pangasinan."

In Batangas, where a large percentage of beef sold in Metro Manila is obtained, business is still normal.

"My buyers are not worried. I tell them the beef we sell comes from grazing cows here in the province, and were fed mainly with grasses," said Virginia Cabasaan, who has been selling beef for 45 years at the Cuenca Public Market in Batangas.

IM Baaack
MCD
Strube

137 human deaths

Mad cow disease, formally known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), is a brain-wasting disease usually transmitted to cows via contaminated feeds. It has an incubation period of four to six years in animals.

It was first reported in the United Kingdom in 1986. Then the disease swept throughout the country, prompting Britain to destroy 3.7 million cattle in the 1980s and 1990s.

BSE can pass on to people who eat infected beef products, causing a related condition called variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD).

At least 137 people have died of vCJD, all linked to eating BSE-infected beef or to having received blood or tissue transplants from vCJD patients. Most of the cases were recorded in Britain, six in France and one each in Italy, Ireland, Canada and the United States.

Six suspected vCJD patients are still alive.

Originated from scrapie

BSE appears to have originated from scrapie, an endemic spongiform encephalopathy in sheep and goats that has been recognized in Europe since the mid-18th century.

It has since spread to most sheep-breeding countries and is widespread in the UK, where until 1988 the rendered carcasses of livestock (including sheep) were fed to ruminants and other animals as a protein-rich nutritional supplement.

People can get CJD naturally. It occurs in about one in one million people, apparently due to a genetic mutation that runs in families.

"In contrast to the traditional forms of CJD, vCJD has affected younger patients (average age 29 years, as opposed to 65 years for CJD), has a relatively longer duration of illness (median of 14 months as opposed to 4.5 months) and is strongly linked to exposure to BSE," the World Health Organization said in a statement.

Patients usually experience psychiatric symptoms in the early stage, which most commonly take the form of depression or, less often, a schizophrenia-like psychosis.

Unusual sensory symptoms, such as "stickiness" of the skin, have been experienced by half of the cases early on in the illness.

Neurological signs develop, including unsteadiness, difficulty walking and involuntary movements, as the illness progresses and by the time of death patients become completely immobile and mute.

There is no cure or treatment for BSE, scrapie, CJD or related diseases.

With a report from Reuters

Still baffling to scientists

MAD cow disease, which officials say has been found for the first time in the United States, still mystifies scientists because it is not caused by a virus, bacteria or other microbes, does not alert the immune system and can jump from species to species.

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) had been found in a single Holstein cow in Washington state.

People can get a form of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease known as vCJD from eating beef products infected by BSE.

BSE and CJD are members of a class of diseases called transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). They are believed to be caused by misfolded proteins called prions.

TSEs affect cats, mink, elk, deer, cattle, sheep and a range of other animals. Rabbits, horses and dogs seem to be resistant but it is not clear why.

TSEs can be passed on in food. Cattle are believed to have become infected with BSE when they were fed the rendered remains of sheep, which have their own TSE called scrapie.

Rendering or processing food can destroy the prions, but only with difficulty. Cooking alone will not do the trick.

Infectious prions

There is disagreement on just which beef products may carry the infectious prions that cause the disease. British officials say milk cannot transmit the agent, but there is strong evidence that nerve tissue and other cattle parts ground up for some products may carry it.

A recent Swiss study suggested that, in theory, muscle tissue—which would include steaks—could carry the agent.

No one knows how much a person has to eat to become infected.

Because prions, believed to cause the TSEs, occur naturally in the body, they do not alert the immune system as a virus or bacteria would to prompt a fight against the disease.

Recent research suggests the "bad" prions can cause others to go bad simply by touching them.

Proteins are made by cells following instructions laid out in the genes. But like a cardboard box, a protein must be folded to function and they sometimes get folded into the wrong shape. Usually a cell will recognize this and cause it to be broken up.

But Susan Lindquist of the Whitehead Institute at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and her colleagues found in late 2002 that this does not always happen. They discovered that if the misfolded prions are not broken up quickly enough, they accumulate and alter the cell's metabolism, killing it.

In the brain this kills neurons. When the neurons die they break apart, releasing more prions into the system.

Reuters

The year that was

(First of two parts)

DISCOVER

Massie Santos Ballon

TO MOVE forward, the saying goes, you have to remember to look back, which is why retrospectives are popular at this time of year. As we enter 2004 and watch the events of 2003 become part of history and, in some cases, the stuff of legend, it seems fitting to highlight certain noteworthy science stories that, for one reason or another, never found their way into this column the past year.

Dewey the deer

"Sound of Music" fans, let your inner Maria out as we start here, at the very beginning. After successfully cloning cattle (Second Chance the bull and 86 Squared the cow), goats, pigs and cats, the College of Veterinary Medicine at Texas' A&M University introduced the first cloned white-tail deer on May 23. The university now holds the record for having successfully cloned the most animals.

Unfortunately, efforts to clone a dog, which research led to Cc the cat's existence, have yet to prove successful. Still, now that the canine genome has been sequenced, maybe by this time next year I can be assured that I will never lose my puppy.

Arthritic hands and heels

Back in September, researchers at Oxford Brookes University decried the notion that wearing high heels made women twice as prone as men to having arthritic knees by age 65. By surveying the lifestyles of over 100 women between 55 and 75, researchers concluded that whatever makes women more susceptible to the condition (being overweight before age 40 is a factor), their shoes are not to blame.

In fact, in a surprise twist, the research suggested that dancing in three-inch heels reduced knee problems.

In another study, researchers from the Boston University School of Medicine led by Dr. David Hunter surveyed over 2,500 elderly Chinese residing in Beijing and concluded that using chopsticks stressed the joints of the hand, thus increasing (though not by very much, researchers admit) the risk of osteoarthritis. Critics were quick to challenge the findings, with some people saying that using chopsticks actually built up the hand muscles.

Sleep is good for you

Studies have shown that lack of sleep can impair memory, attention span and the ability to make decisions. Researchers at the University of Chicago used three groups of college students to show that sleep helps improve one's ability to learn a language. Each group of students was asked to listen to everyday words as pronounced by a voice synthesizer.

The first group acted as the control for the experiment. They listened to the distorted words and were asked what words they thought they heard. An hour later they were retested and their test scores improved by 30 percent.

Group 2 was tested at 9 a.m. and took the retest at 9 p.m. the same day. Their scores improved by 10 percent.

Group 3 first heard the words at 9 p.m. and then returned for the retest at 9 a.m. the following day, after a full night's sleep. Group 3 improved their scores by 19 percent.

Conclusion: Maybe listening to language tapes while you sleep really does work.

Decaf that tastes good

Scientists at Japan's Nara Institute of Science and Technology managed to create decaffeinated coffee plants. Apparently the researchers found a way to repress the gene which coded for one of the three enzymes responsible for producing caffeine. The result? Coffee plants with up to 70 percent less caffeine, thus bypassing the industrial decaffeination process that is also blamed for reducing, if not completely removing, the coffee flavor.

Next step: to decaffeinate coffee plants which produce Arabica beans.

That Strad sound

Over the centuries, scientists and laymen alike have come up with countless theories explaining why the quality of sound produced by Antonio Stradivari's violins remains the standard of excellence after nearly three centuries. The hypotheses range from the type/s of wood used to the varnish applied (Red Violin anyone?).

And then came the July issue of Dendrochronologia, where climatologist Lloyd Burckle of Columbia University and dendrochronologist (a tree-ring counter) Henri Grissino-Meyer of the University of Tennessee suggest that a 400-year "Little Ice Age" from the 1400s to the 1800s produced extremely dense trees that were used by the instrument makers of Europe. The period from 1645 to 1715 was so cold, tree growth was slowed down, as evidenced by close, thin layers of tree rings.

Stradivari produced his best instruments between 1700 and 1720, and the authors say that the narrow tree rings would not only strengthen the violin but would also increase the wood's density.

Ateneo soars in big programming fest

(Conclusion)

EUREKA!

Queena N. Lee-Chua

THE ASSOCIATION for Computing Machinery (ACM) Intercollegiate Programming Contest (ICPC) is the most prestigious in the world. Teams of three compete in a five-hour race to solve eight difficult problems. Last October, during the regional finals at the University of Asia and the Pacific, the Philippines scored its best ever. Two Ateneo de Manila University teams made it to the Top 10, while the other two got honorable mentions.

Ateneo first joined the ICPC in Singapore in 2000, and placed 12th (the best Philippine team). It missed the 2001 contest, but made up by preparing extensively for 2002, where it placed 7th.

Coach Dr. Pablo Manalastas mused, "Among all Asian students, the Filipino is at the greatest disadvantage—too short high school, not enough math and science, too many 'soft' subjects. Programming is homework done the night before deadline, but for his Asian counterpart, programming is a way of life. We also do not have enough abstract algebra, computational geometry, combinatorics, operations research, etc."

Scouting for programmers

Manalastas and assistant coach Jon Fernandez first scouted for good programmers who trained for months face-to-face or via the Web. Students solved ACM-type problems and discussed their math and C/Java program solutions. During semestral break, they went out of town for team-building activities, lectures and five-hour simulated contests.

The latter was particularly helpful, as sophomore computer science (CS) major Mark Punzalan reports, they "got used to working under high pressure and extreme conditions, like severe lack of rest, and working as a cohesive unit, without fighting over the single available PC."

"Our contestants were diligent," reflects assistant coach Eric Vidal. "From the start of the year until the very last day before the contest, they were solving as many problems as they could while doing school work at the same time. They did not only perform well, they performed well together. Not only did we require them to solve problems individually, we also asked them to discuss [the problems]. We even did personality-matching tests to ensure that the members would work well in the contest itself."

Participants also made their own strategies. Electronics and communications engineering sophomore Allan Espinosa reports: "Our skills complemented each other's. We developed a style called extreme programming and used this in the dying minutes of the contest. I was programming the last problem when I got stuck. While Mark was watching me, I asked him how to do a method I did not know. Then he took over the machine. But he was not familiar with the environment I was programming in so we switched turns typing and debugging a single program. We both learned each other's technique during that moment."

Espinosa, Punzalan and Charles Yeung's team garnered the highest rank by a Philippine team in any ACM competition: fifth place.

Biggest challenge

What were the participants' biggest challenges? Yeung (junior, management information systems, MIS) felt that the main hurdle was choosing which topics to concentrate on, "which to study to maximize preparation."

Russell Santos (senior, CS), who felt that the contest questions were "big puzzles," found that the "hardest part was the five hours of continuous thinking."

Neill Wilbert Li (freshman, CS), a contest veteran since high school, felt that the hardest aspect was "working efficiently with teammates under time pressure."

Mary Louise Lim (junior, MIS) echoes this: "The great amount of trust that you have to give to each other."

Aileen Dy (senior, CS) felt "humbled, because the contest taught me how much more I did not know, and how much I could learn from others."

Punzalan has a dream "of seeing a team from the Philippines break in the world finals. I don't think the rest of the world truly acknowledges that Filipinos are among the best programmers, and having a team in the finals (and maybe even clinch the top prize) would prove that we belong among the world programming elite."

May that dream come true next year.

Serial relationships bad for women's mental health, says British study

WOMEN who get involved in serial relationships after their marriage or long-term partnership break down often slump into depression, but, strangely, men fare better.

A study published recently said men and women who are in a long-term relationship are happier than singles, although men do better in cohabitation while marriage is more beneficial for women.

Women, though, have a harder time emotionally when relationships fail, it suggested. The more breakups they experience, and the more times they move on to other relationships, the likelier women are prone to suffer from depression and anxiety.

For men, however, it was the reverse.

Among men who reenter the mating market after their long-term relationship breaks down, those in the best spirits were those who had gone through two or more short-term partnerships, said the researchers, who said they are surprised by this finding.

The research was an analysis of a data mine called the British Household Panel Survey. This began in 1991 and includes information supplied annually from 10,000 British adults. It includes a 12-item questionnaire designed to assess levels of psychological distress, depression and anxiety.

The study analyzed the returns for the year 2000 from 4,430 people. Of that number, 9 percent had remained single throughout their lives and over half had been in a stable marriage or cohabitation during their lifetime. Of the remainder, 35 percent had experienced one partnership bustup during their lifetime.

Other findings in the report confirm previous research that women who remain single throughout their lives do much better, in terms of mental health, than steadfast bachelors.

AFP

SCIENCE/HEALTH

E-mail: pr_science_health@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Cesar D. Mangawang
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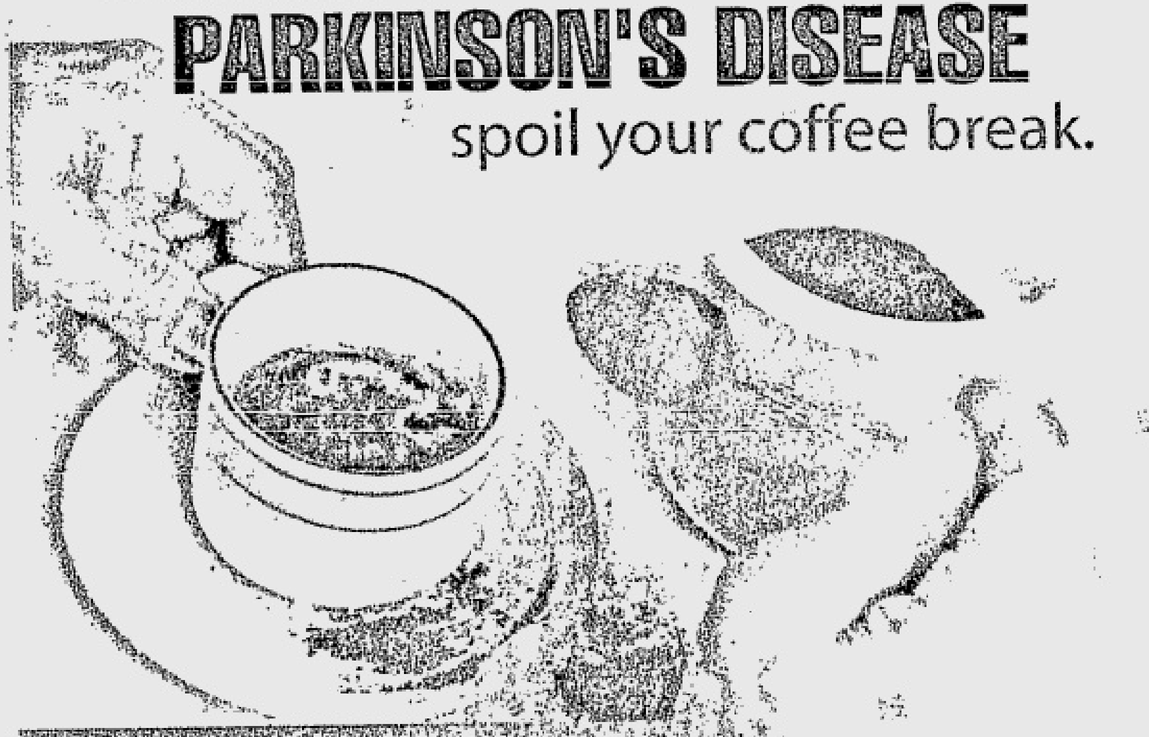
Don't let PARKINSON'S DISEASE spoil your coffee break.



Parkinson's disease (PD) is a slowly progressive disease of the nervous system characterized by stiffness of the joints simulating arthritis, slowness in movement and postural instability. It can hinder you from doing the things you want to do, even simple things that can make a lot of difference.

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Arthritis does not spare the young

By Tessa R. Salazar

JASMIN Manoloto, 22, was crying in pain at the female ward of the Makati Medical Center. Her lips were pale white and her eerily deformed fingers lay motionless on her tummy.

For six years, Jasmin wearily bore her affliction; she could feel and hear the movement of every joint in her body. But in the past five months, the pain in her hips and right knees became unbearable. Last month, she had to stop going to school as she had become wheelchair-bound.

Jasmin was diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis (JRA), which affected her hips and right knee.

Autoimmune disorder

Medical experts say children can develop almost all types of arthritis that affect adults, but the most common type that affects them is JRA.

JRA causes joint inflammation and stiffness for more than six weeks and affects children 16 years or younger.

The National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases of the National Institutes of Health says JRA occurs when the immune system, which normally helps fight off harmful, foreign substances such as bacteria or viruses, attacks healthy cells and tissues instead. The result is inflammation, marked by redness, heat, pain and swelling.

Doctors do not know why the immune system goes awry among children who develop JRA.

They suspect, however, that something in a child's genes makes him susceptible to developing JRA, and an environmental factor, such as a virus, triggers the development of the disorder.

Surgery, the answer?

Physical examinations revealed that Jasmin had weak quadriceps in both hips. She feels pain, even if she takes painkillers. She dreads moving.

Her orthopedic surgeons are Doctors Ramon Gustilo, Jack Pandanan and Charles Ledonio.

Gustilo says the youngest patient his team has so far handled was a 12-year-old girl who couldn't walk until six of her joints—in the hips, knees and ankles—are replaced when she turns 14.

Surgical procedures can get rid of the pain and enable patients to walk again, but there is no guarantee that its effects will be permanent.

Says Gustilo: "If you're young, the procedure is usually good for 20 to 25 years. About 10 percent [of the cases] will fail, however, and will have to be redone in 20 years."

On Dec. 6, Jasmine's hips were replaced with artificial implants. As a result, she was able to sit up.

On Dec. 15, she underwent another operation, called total knee arthroplasty, to replace her afflicted knees.

Both operations were successful. Her exercise regimen now includes bending her knees. She is set to continue her therapy after Christmas.

Benefits of technology

Gustilo says arthritis treatment today is much better compared to 40 years ago when he started doing orthopedic surgery in the United States. Then, instead of surgically replacing joints, doctors made the painful knees stiff and completely rigid to eliminate pain. Instead of giving medicines to manage pain, they gave crutches.

Orthopedic surgeries began in the 1960s. This improved the quality of life of arthritis sufferers, and was a lasting option.

Surgery, however, does not come cheap.

The cost of Jasmin's hospitalization and surgery has run up to more than half-a-million pesos, but Gustilo is helping her with the expenses.

It was Gustilo who designed the prosthesis used by Jasmin.

Gustilo is the president of Gustilo Kyle Total Joint Replacement and Arthritis Center in Minneapolis and is known for designing the Gustilo Total Knee Arthroplasty, which was conceptualized with the Wright Orthopedic Co. He is also an orthopedic surgery professor at the University of Minnesota.

Osteoarthritis

A common type of arthritis, osteoarthritis usually afflicts middle-aged and older people and can range from very mild to very severe. It affects the hands and weight-bearing joints such as the knees, hips, feet and spine.

Early detection, says Gustilo, helps in managing the disease. "We can organize an exercise program and avoid complicating factors such as obesity, and advise the patient on what food supplements to take."

Gustilo says doctors could now determine a person's predisposition to the disease as early as birth. If the hips are not well developed at birth, the infant is likely to develop what is called secondary osteoarthritis.

"Secondary osteoarthritis can't kill but it would destroy your joints and seriously affect the quality of life," he says.

Gustilo admits he had osteoarthritis in his knees and spine, but it was not too painful to prevent him from doing his everyday routine.

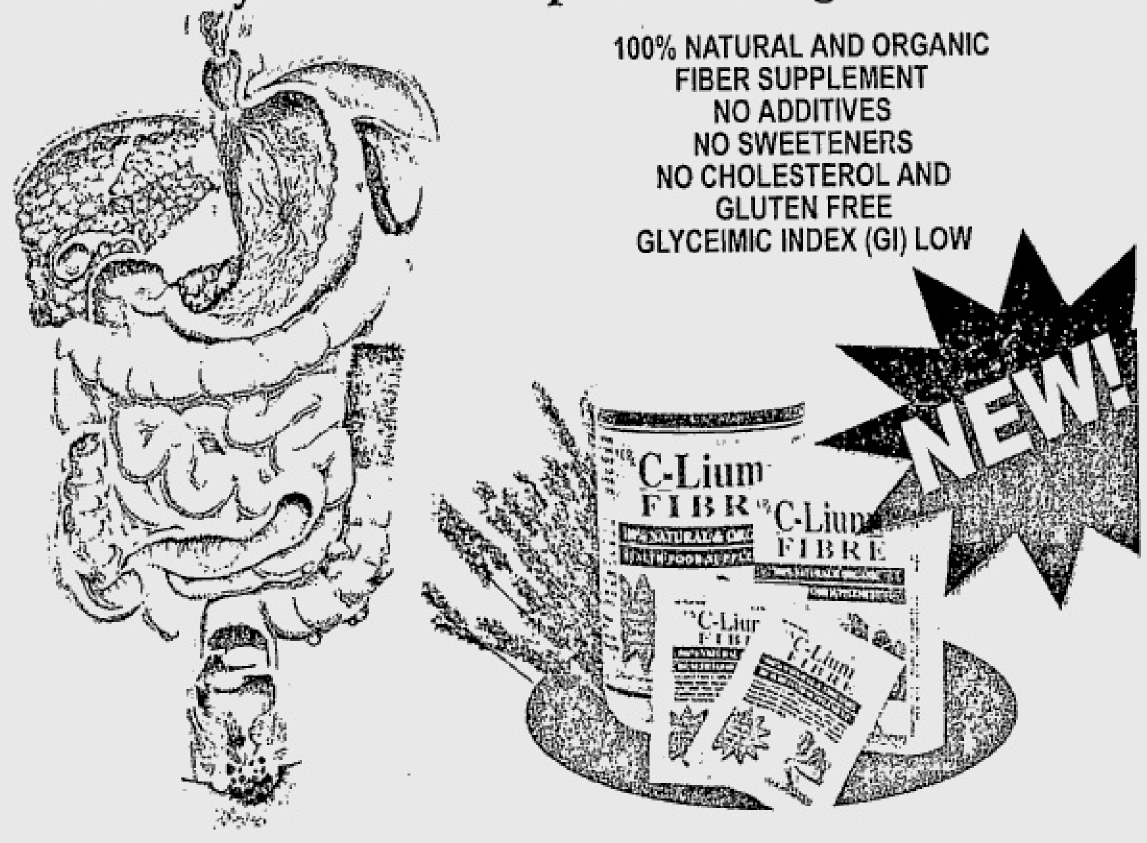
He adheres to a proper diet and takes his medicines daily. "There are food supplements that prevent osteoarthritis from progressing or from getting painful," he says.

Some medicines can prevent cartilage cells from progressing into osteoarthritis. Food supplements like arthenol are preventive and work for those exhibiting early symptoms of osteoarthritis.

Gustilo says Vioxx, arcoxia and other anti-inflammatory drugs also showed promise in preventing the painful type of osteoarthritis.

DIABETIC?

A healthy stomach helps blood sugar control.



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Recharging emotional and spiritual batteries

By Rafael R. Castillo, MD

MEDICAL FILES

(Conclusion)

THERE is a conscious life source that fuels every aspect of our existence. This power manifests through many forms including our mind, body, spirit and emotions. When we feel exhausted, chances are we've failed to recharge this power regularly. If this source of power is regularly charged, we can tap into this power and harness the energy to sustain us through life's travails. We get empowered by life and not get exhausted by it.

The connections between mental, physical, emotional and spiritual power run deep and wide. Health experts say that when we're able to maintain the flow of power between these aspects of ourselves, we experience easier movement, greater advancement and are more in control. By learning to strengthen, integrate and utilize these aspects of ourselves properly, we tap into the reservoir of power that turns every aspect of ordinary life into a more meaningful and fulfilling experience.

We've read tons of literature on healthy lifestyle practices. This is a good time to check our lives to make sure our diet, exercise and general health practices are consistent with what it takes to sustain our physical health.

Steps to take

Dr. John Powers recommends some steps we may take the next time we run into a wall and feel drained:

Admit it. We are not supermen. We have emotional hiccups and we must admit it when we run into an emotional wall.

Attend to it. Replenishing emotional strength takes time. When a car battery runs out of "juice," it needs recharging. There are two ways to recharge a car battery. The first is called a "quick charge." One provides the dead battery with a relatively high amperage charge from another energy source. However, there are no guarantees that the quick charge will be there the next time you need to start the car engine.

The better way to recharge a battery, provided it has enough life to maintain the charge, is a "trickle charge." This is a slower process to restore life.

An emotional quick charge occurs when we watch a movie just to escape from reality. In the end, an emotional quick charge may not be there when we need it most. A better way is to provide emotional trickle charges.

Quick charging

Here's how to do it, according to Dr. Powers:

Read, read, read. We should read inspiring books as often as we can. A good reading list includes the Bible, devotionals, books on leadership, commentaries, history and biographies.

Find and do small lofty tasks you can finish. Our daily work is never-ending; it will always be there with more work to do.

We have to find time to do other things, which may not give us anything materially, but can give us a sense of fulfillment. We can cultivate hobbies we can divert our attention to from time to time. This can recharge our emotional batteries.

These are things we can finish, probably wipe our hands of whatever stains and dirt we have gathered and walk away with a sense of completion. It can be tinkering with the car, writing an article, doing garden or yard work, or playing 18 holes of golf. In other words, it's something we can finish.

Prioritize your schedule. Keep a careful watch over your time, especially with people who "drain" you. We should be good stewards of our time.

Expand your heart. Listen to inspirational tapes, watch uplifting movies, and read lofty books. Avoid those that convey negative messages and emotions. They can drain you even more.

Dream time

Develop a "dream day." Each week we should set aside a "dream time." It can be at the end of the week.

During this dream day, shut out the world. In bed or on your favorite couch, enjoy the company of a good book like the Bible. Have a notepad and pen nearby. In between, think about all the things you dream to accomplish. Review your life's purpose, objectives and goals.

Our relationships with God and our family are our most important emotional and spiritual support structure. It's easier said than done, but we should never allow anything to get in the way of these vital relationships.

Happy New Year to all. We wish you all the best and the brightest this new year.

E-mail: pr_saturday_special@inquirer.com.ph

SATURDAY Special

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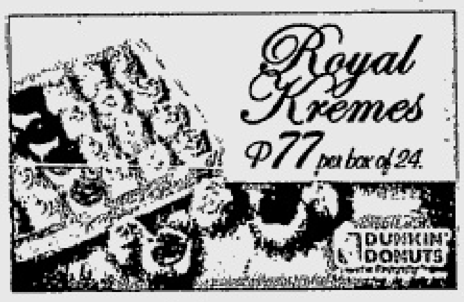
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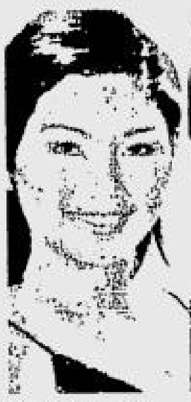
Only three survivors remain on 'Star in A Million'


REGIS. Power belter.

SANTOS. Wild card.

SANTOS. Youngest finalist.

By Andy P. Bais

As "Star In A Million," ABS-CBN's talent search, draws to a close, only three of the original 10 contestants are left to compete in the grand finals this month.

They will vie for the P1 M grand prize, a house and lot, and a recording contract.

Cebu's pride

Cebu's pride, Sheryn Mae Regis, is only 4'10", but when she sings, everybody listens. Billed as the "power belter" of the group, she has been consistently topping the competition since it started.

She has been winning amateur singing contests since age five. She was a theater actress in school, and was a member of Cebu Normal University's theater group, which performed in the US in 2001.

Competition

How does she prepare herself before each competition? "I don't talk too much. I make sure that I rest, and I always take my vitamins," the 22-year-old charmer says.

Marinel Santos is the youngest finalist at 18. She never thought she'd pass the screenings because she failed to make the grade in other competitions. "I auditioned *sa* 'Star Quest' and 'Star for a Night,' *pero hindi ako pumasa,*" she shares.

Her parents are also entertainers. She's a second year AB English student in Laguna, but she had to stop schooling because of the competition.

Latest teleserye

She's elated to be one of the singers (along with Erik Santos) of the theme of the ABS-CBN *teleserye*, "It Might Be You." "At least, *ano man ang mangyari* after the finals, *maririnig ko pa rin ang boses ko,*" she laughs.

The third qualifier is 22-year-old Erik Santos, the "wild card" of the batch. He was the 10th member of the group to survive the show's "recall" edition. "*Natalo ako* during the preliminary round. *Ako yung nag*-top *sa mga talunan,*" he laughs.

Second chance

Erik is very thankful for the second chance.

The nursing student started singing at age six and joined a barangay singing contest when he was eight years old. "*Puro matatanda ang kalaban ko.* I sang Sharon's 'Pangarap na Bituin,' but I lost," he recalls. Well, he could win big now!

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KENKOY KLASIKS by Tony Velasquez

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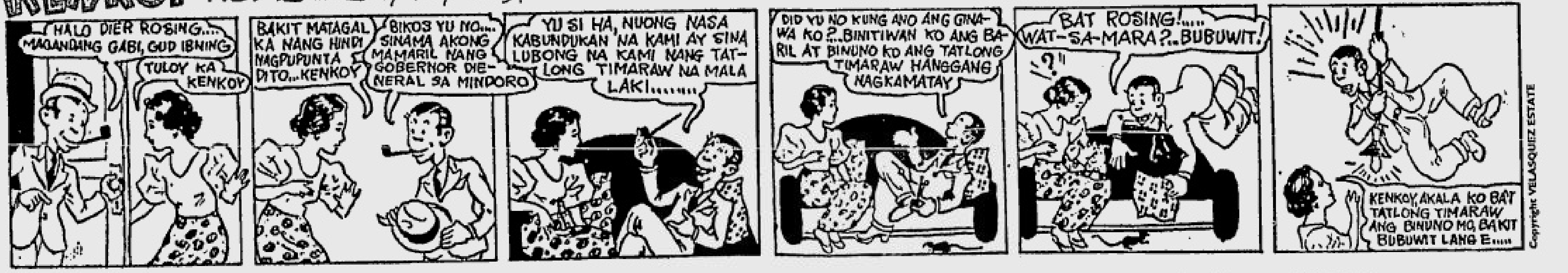
HALO DIER ROSING.... MAGANDANG GABI, GUD IBNING
TULOY KA KENKOY
BAKIT MATAGAL KA NANG HINDI NAGPUPUNTA DITO...KENKOY
BIKOS YU NO... SINAMA AKONG MAMARIL NANG GOBERNOR DIE-NERAL SA MINDORO
YU SI HA, NUONG NASA KABUNDUKAN NA KAMI AY SINA LUBONG NA KAMI NANG TAT-LONG TIMARAW NA MALA LAKI.......
DID YU NO KUNG ANO ANG GINA-WA KO?..BINITIWAN KO ANG BA-RIL AT BINUNO KO ANG TATLONG TIMARAW HANGGANG NAGKAMATAY
BAT ROSING!.... WAT-SA-MARA?..BUBUWIT!
?!
KENKOY, AKALA KO BAT TATLONG TIMARAW ANG BINUNO MO, BAKIT BUBUWIT LANG E.....
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Outstanding filmfest entries given incentives by CEB

WHEN the Cinema Evaluation Board of the Film Development Council of the Philippines started screening movies for possible incentives last year, some film sectors weren't clear about how the amusement tax rebates would be arrived at, availed of, and used to boost a rated movie's appeal to viewers.

These days, however, the industry has properly attuned itself to the CEB's functions and incentives. That's why, for the current Metro Manila Film Festival, rated films have been announcing their CEB

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

evaluations in their ads—A for "Crying Ladies," and B for "The Homecoming," "Mano Po 2," "Bridal Shower" and "Filipinas."

Movie people are impressed that so many festival entries have been found deserving of amusement tax rebates by the CEB (100 percent rebate for A, and 65 percent for B).

The incentives will go a long way in helping pay for the entries' unusually big production budgets, especially for the movies that turn out to be the filmfest's major blockbusters.

By the way, contrary to some reports, "Crying Ladies" isn't the first film to get an A evaluation from the CEB. Last year, Star Cinema's "Noon at Ngayon," directed by Marilou Diaz-Abaya, was similarly given the 100-percent incentive.

Now that the CEB and our movie people appear to have gotten into the swing of things, we hope that 2004 will turn out to be a better film year all around.

KORONEL. Adjudged MMFF's Best Supporting Actress for her performance in "Crying Ladies."

The CEB has been put up to encourage producers to make good movies, and to reward their best efforts with amusement tax rebates.

We trust that more producers will finance the making of better movies that will entertain and inspire moviegoers, and deserve to get either a B or an A from the CEB. In this mutually beneficent scenario, everybody wins!

Movies on TV

On HBO, Jan. 3 at 12:30 p.m., "The Salton Sea." Jan. 4 at 9:30 a.m., "Gossip." Jan 5 at 5:30 p.m., "She's in Love." Jan. 6 at 2 p.m., "Gladiator." Jan. 7 at 9 p.m., "Alive."

On Cinemax, Jan. 3 at 3:15 p.m., "Parenthood." Jan. 4 at 4 p.m., "Rasputin." Jan. 5 at 9 p.m., "Auggie Rose." Jan. 6 at 9:45 a.m., "Dial M for Murder." Jan. 7 at 12:45 p.m., "Lean on Me." Jan. 8 at 1:45 a.m., "A Place in the Sun." Jan. 9 at 3:15 p.m., "Cool Hand Luke."

Seiko's 'Bridal Shower' playfully mucks up conventional notions of love and romance

By Rito P. Asilo

JEFFREY Jeturian's movie, about three attractive, career-driven women and their romantic entanglements, is not just a notch above Seiko's usual sex flicks. It's a truly engaging, well-made film that playfully mucks up our conventional notions on love and romance—with a generous dose of intelligent, non-slapstick humor that will leave you roaring with laughter!

If the rest of the MMFF entries are better than this delightful film (given that "Bridal" didn't figure prominently in the awards), then the festival must have an extremely good crop of entries this year!

Ingenious comedy

In Jeturian's ingenious comedy, the lives of Tates (Dina Bonnevie), Katie (Cherry Pie Picache in an endearing performance deserving of an award) and Sonia (Francine Prieto) weave in and out of diverting, sometimes farcical situations about finding love (and lust) in this technologically advanced age.

Tates yearns to end her casual one-night-stands by working on, and paying for, the annulment of her boyfriend's (Christian Vasquez) previous marriage. She pays a huge amount to "expedite" the proceedings (very *Pinoy*, right?). But he soon loses the drive and appetite after she finally gets the papers.

PICACHE. Award-worthy performance.

Sonia is torn between a sexually skillful but starving artist (Douglas Robinson) and a filthy rich but boring Mama's boy (Juancho Valentino).

Her situation gets murkier when she starts missing her period and has to choose whom to marry before her interesting condition gets her in a bigger dilemma. But, if she decides to marry for money, should she sign a prenuptial agreement arranged by her fiancee's overbearing mother? Should she choose love over security?

Abundant chatrooms

Katie knows she's too physically "bountiful" (obese) to attract a man. She turns to the Internet to find romance in cyberspace's equally abundant chatrooms—only to realize that the solution offered by the technological tool is deceptively temporal and superficial. So, when she finds a charming and sensitive macho dancer (the promising Alfred Vargas), she takes the chance at romance. But is he simply milking her for money?

Aside from Picache and Bonnevie's winning performances, the statuesque Prieto proves that there's more to her sexy boldstar appeal that was not as effectively displayed in "Liberated."

Also, we don't see a scheming Boots Anson Roa in *Pinoy* movies everyday, do we? And Flora Gasser's wry humor is delightful.

We were similarly pleased to see familiar faces from the theater who lent their thespic skills to add credibility and integrity to the film.

Comic timing

There are memorable, extremely gag-worthy scenes that touch on very *Pinoy* practices: Dina's hilarious suicide scene (also involving her dog) and the memorable hospital scene that follows (a social commentary on inhumane medical practices); sex trade on the world-wide web; suspicious and disapproving in-laws; Cherry Pie's delectable tongue-firmly-in-cheek comic timing when she delivers her "*Wala namang personalan*!" line, and Francine's innocent "Last *na 'to, ha*?" one-liner when her moral resolve swerves to the left.

SEIKO'S/ C3

Our Father's touch

GOD isn't choosy, whether you are spiritual or not. But He only wants those who are truly loyal. So, it is up to you to seek Him.

You and I can experience his supernatural power. Everyday, we must ask for the Father's touch because, as Christians, our dependence on Him is Power.

STREET SMART

Mandy Navasero

Performance

The Richard School of Music staged its first Music Recital at Santa Isabel College recently. Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit was among the familiar faces in the audiences, watching his daughter's performance on the piano.

Margie and Chet Espino's three children played their pieces with such grace. Giovanni, 10, son of Dr. Rebecca B. Singson and Luciano Zahar, played wonderfully despite his ankle being in a cast. So did Daniela Asanza, a former cover girl of Baby Magazine.

Have a New Year full of hope!

THREE participants in the Richard School of Music's first recital.

Photoworkshop

Our three-day photoworkshops include hands-on exercises and critique, and will run every Saturday from January to March. For inquiries, call 896-3208 or 0916 706-0130 or e-mail at mn_photocom@i-manila.com.ph or mandynavaseropro@yahoo.com.

Yuletide presents and their meanings

By Behn Cervantes

"WHO is Santa Claus to you?," I asked Pocholo Ordoñez, a yuppie from Nueva Ecija. "Saint Nicklaus or St. Nick," he quickly shot back. "Naah," I cut in. "What does Santa symbolize for you?" "Gifts!," Pocholo answered.

Jo-anne Marques, his cousin, volunteered: "I don't believe in Santa Claus!"

Another cousin

I turned to Maite Marques, another cousin from Davao, who declared with authority, "Santa Claus was Saint Nicklaus. He went around giving gifts to children to spread joy. He wasn't from the North Pole!"

Maite cut in when someone else tried to add to the fictitious history of the jolly, fat gift-giver: "He was from Norway."

I still didn't get what I really wanted—a deeper consciousness of the spirit of Christmas, so we can rise above crass commercialism.

Birthday

A young boy was asked if he got the special gift he wanted. "No," he said. I asked, "Why are you so happy nevertheless?" The boy smiled and said, "Well, it is His birthday, isn't it?" Ahh, finally I was getting somewhere!

Since I was obviously stuck in the world of the living and the quick, I decided to postpone further questioning. Instead, I tried to internalize it. I turned on my cell phone to retrieve messages that would be a lark to share with you all.

Hectic schedule

Susan Tagle, one of my most reliable friends, sent me a text to rib anyone over 40. Despite her hectic schedule to help in the presidential campaign of her longtime boss, Fernando Poe Jr., she maintains her sense of wry humor.

She sent a message to a significant few who naturally got a jolt from the wit of the Christmas wish: "Lord, please grant prosperity, happiness, contentment, love, good health and, most importantly, great looks to my friends: Nestor Torre, Norma Japitana, Cynthia Patag, Au Cobarrubias, Angela Timtiman, Baby Lacson, Lollie Mara and Haydee Yorac." Amen!

YOUR WEEKLY TV GUIDE FROM JAN 3 - JAN 9

CH	2	4	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	25	[illegible]
	6:00 Star in A Million 6:30 Magandang Gabi, Bayan 8:30 Home Along da Airport 9:00 Victim 9:30 Buttercup 10:30 Kontrobersyal 11:30 "F" 12:00 Sports Unlimited	7:00 Yan Ang Pinoy 8:00 The Working President 9:00 To be Announced	7:00 Sailormoon Sailor Stars 7:30 Mirror, Mirror 8:00 Wow Mali 9:00 Viva Box Office 11:00 Go For Gold	6:00 Search for a Star 7:00 Imbestigador 8:00 Idol Ko Si Kap 9:30 Kakabakaba Adventures 10:30 Celebrity Turns 11:30 Flash Report 12:00 Master Showman	6:00 Isumbong Mo Kay Tulfo 7:00 7 Days 8:00 John Doe 9:00 Saturday Night Playhouse 11:00 PGMA	5:00 National Basketball League 8:00 Japan Video Topics 9:00 Carols from Many Land 10:00 Tinapay ng Buhay 11:00 Iyo ang Katarungan	6:00 Baywatch 7:00 Game Plan 7:30 The Amazing Race 8:30 Boston Public 9:30 Studio 23 Presents 11:30 Real Deel	6:00 Agila Reports 6:30 Screen Savers 7:30 Euromaxx 8:00 Car Guys 8:30 DWTV Journal 9:00 Ang Tamang Daan 10:00 Pasugo	7:00 Xclusive Cinema Special 9:00 Oras Ng Katolohanan 9:30 Armor of God 10:00 Oh Tokyo 11:00 Pinoy Wrestling
	5:30 Sharon 7:00 Wansapanataym 8:30 Tanging Ina 9:30 Sunday Family Cinema 11:30 Dong Puno Tonight 12:00 The Weekend News	6:00 PBA First Filipino cup 9:00 The Working President 10:00 Concert of Various Artist	6:00 Zorro 6:30 Guyferd 7:00 Ispup atbp. 8:00 Sing-Galing 9:00 Viva Cine Idols 11:00 Speed	5:30 Partners Mel & Jay 7:00 K! 8:30 Daddy Di Do Du 9:30 Sunday Night Box Office 11:20 Flash Report 11:30 Che-Che Lazaro Presents	6:00 Smack Down Wrestling 7:00 Ripley's Believe It or Not 8:00 May Puso ang Batas 9:00 Sunday's Big Event 11:00 A Second Look	7:00 2003 Worldpool Master 9:00 Sinemaks 11:00 Driven Show 11:30 El Shaddai	6:00 Jimmy Neutron 6:30 Futurama 7:00 Exposed 8:00 Yes Dear 8:30 Spin City 9:00 Will & Grace 9:30 The Bachelor 10:30 Digital Tour	6:00 Captured 6:30 Fresh Gear 7:00 Convergence 7:30 Euromaxx 8:00 New Yankee Workshop 8:30 DWTV Journal 9:00 Ang Tamang Daan 10:00 Ang Iglesia ni Cristo	7:00 Sunday Mini-Series 8:00 Oh Tokyo 9:00 Sunday Night movies
	6:00 TV Patrol 6:30 Next Level Na, Game K N B? 7:30 Basta't Kasama Kita 8:00 Sana'y Wala Nang Wakas 8:30 It Might Be You 9:00 OK Fine! Whatever 11:00 Insider 11:30 The Correspondents	6:00 Concert at the Park 7:00 Strangebrew 7:30 In the Raw 8:00 TeleDyaryo 10:00 Family Rosary Crusade 11:00 Auto Focus	6:00 F 6:30 Balitang-Balita 7:00 Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko 7:30 Kool on Kam 8:30 That 70s Show 9:00 On Air 9:30 Misadventures of Maverick and Ariel 10:00 The Big News 10:30 Mad TV	6:15 Frontpage 7:00 Extra Challenge 7:30 Twin Hearts 8:00 Endless Love II 8:30 Starstruck 9:00 Narito Ang Puso Ko 9:30 Lagot Ka, Isusumbong Kita 11:00 Saksi 11:30 I-Witness	6:00 Invader Zim 6:30 Entertainment Tonight 7:00 Just for Laffs 8:00 Jag 9:00 The Agency 10:00 Newswatch Now 10:30 Sex & the City 11:00 OPTV	7:00 NBA 9:30 In This Corner 10:30 IBC News Tonite 11:00 Linawin Natin	6:00 Beast Machines 6:30 Godzilla 7:00 Batman 7:30 Samurai X 8:00 Birds of Prey 9:00 Charmed 10:00 News Central 10:30 Oprah 11:30 Travel Time	6:00 Net 25 Report 6:30 World Report Filipino Edition 7:00 Openline 7:30 Euromaxx 8:00 Convergence 8:30 DWTV Journal 9:00 Ang Tamang Daan 10:00 Pasugo	6:30 Q Showcase 7:30 Oras ng Katolohanan 8:00 Q Showcase 9:00 Ang Dating Daan
	6:00 TV Patrol 6:30 Next Level Na, Game K N B? 7:30 Basta't Kasama Kita 8:00 Sana'y Wala Nang Wakas 8:30 It Might Be You 9:00 Bida Si Mister, Bida Si Misis 11:00 Insider 11:30 Pipol	6:00 Paco Park Presents 7:00 Strangebrew 7:30 In the Raw 8:00 TeleDyaryo 10:00 The Working President 11:00 Family Rosary Crusade	6:00 2 Yrs Vacation w/ Dinosaurs 6:30 Balitang-Balita 7:00 Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko 7:30 Kool on Kam 8:30 Campus TV 9:00 E.R. 10:00 The Big News 10:30 Wedding Works 11:00 Bugs	6:15 Frontpage 7:00 Extra Challenge 7:30 Twin Hearts 8:00 Endless Love II 8:30 Starstruck 9:00 Narito Ang Puso Ko 9:30 All Together Now 11:00 Saksi 11:30 I-Witness	6:00 Invader Zim 6:30 Entertainment Tonight 7:00 Ed 8:00 Ally McBeal 9:00 Single Girls 10:00 Newswatch Now 10:30 Sports in Focus 11:00 RTV, Our Rhythm, Our Reality	7:00 2003 Worldpool Master 9:00 Entrepinoy 10:00 Travel 10:30 IBC News Tonite 11:00 Up Close and Personal 11:30 Action Express	6:00 Beast Machines 6:30 Godzilla 7:00 Batman 7:30 Samurai X 8:00 Dawson's Creek 9:00 Smallville 10:00 News Central 10:30 Oprah 11:30 Twilight Zone	6:00 Net 25 Report 6:30 World Report Filipino Edition 7:00 Openline 7:30 Euromaxx 8:00 Screen Savers Edit A 8:30 DWTV Journal 9:00 Ang Tamang Daan 10:00 Pasugo	6:30 Q Showcase 7:30 Oras ng Katolohanan 8:00 Ang Dating Daan
	6:00 TV Patrol 6:30 Next Level Na, Game K N B? 7:30 Basta't Kasama Kita 8:00 Sana'y Wala Nang Wakas 8:30 It Might Be You 9:00 Whattamen 10:00 Klasmeyts 11:00 Insider 11:30 Special Assignment	5:00 PBA First Filipino cup 10:00 MMDA on The Road 11:00 Magbuhay Professional 11:30 Unlimited Diving	6:00 Pygmalio 6:30 Balitang-Balita 7:00 Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko 7:30 Kool on Kam 8:30 Friends 9:00 Single 10:00 The Big News 10:30 Task Force Siyasat	6:15 Frontpage 7:00 Extra Challenge 7:30 Twin Hearts 8:00 Endless Love II 8:30 Starstruck 9:00 Narito Ang Puso Ko 9:30 Nuts Entertainment 11:00 Saksi 11:30 Jessica Soho Reports	6:00 Invader Zim 6:30 Entertainment Tonight 7:00 Malcolm in the Middle 7:30 Still Standing 8:00 Roswell 9:00 Everwood 10:00 Newswatch Now 10:30 Girls Behaving Badly 11:00 Cerge for Truth	10:00 Breaking BYK 101 10:30 IBC News Tonite 11:00 Breaking Barriers	6:00 Beast Machines 6:30 Godzilla 7:00 Batman 7:30 Samurai X 8:00 CSI 9:00 Alias 10:00 News Central 10:30 Oprah 11:30 Twilight Zone	6:00 Net 25 Report 6:30 World Report Filipino Edition 7:00 Openline 7:30 Euromaxx 8:00 Fresh Gear 8:30 DWTV Journal 9:00 Ang Tamang Daan 10:00 The Message	6:30 Q Showcase 7:30 Oras ng Katolohanan 8:00 Q Showcase 9:00 Ang Dating Daan 10:30 Q Showcase
	6:00 TV Patrol 6:30 Next Level Na, Game K N B? 7:30 Basta't Kasama Kita 8:00 Sana'y Wala Nang Wakas 8:30 It Might Be You 9:00 Maalaala Mo Kaya 11:00 Insider 11:30 Dong Puno Live	6:00 The Working President 7:00 Ugnayan Pambansa 8:00 TeleDyaryo 10:00 Paco Park Presents 11:00 Family Rosary Crusade	6:00 Dragon League 6:30 Balitang-Balita 7:00 Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko 7:30 Kool on Kam 8:30 Guinness World Records 9:30 Working 10:00 The Big News 10:30 By Request	6:15 Frontpage 7:00 Extra Challenge 7:30 Twin Hearts 8:00 Endless Love II 8:30 Starstruck 9:00 Narito Ang Puso Ko 9:30 Magpakailanman 11:00 Saksi 11:30 Debate	6:00 Invader Zim 6:30 Entertainment Tonight 7:00 Baby Bob 7:30 Sabrina 8:00 Felicity 9:00 Crossing Jordan 10:00 Newswatch Now 10:30 Hidden Hills 11:00 Police Hour	6:00 Game Channel 7:00 NBA 9:30 CelebrityDatCom 10:30 IBC News Tonite 11:00 Opinyon at Desisyon	6:00 Beast Machines 6:30 Godzilla 7:00 Batman 7:30 Samurai X 8:00 Barkada Nights 10:00 News Central 10:30 Oprah 11:30 Twilight Zone	6:00 Net 25 Report 6:30 World Report Filipino Edition 7:00 Openline 7:30 Euromaxx 8:00 Screen Savers Edit B 8:30 DWTV Journal 9:00 Ang Tamang Daan 10:00 Pasugo	6:30 Q Showcase 7:30 Oras ng Katolohanan 8:00 Q Showcase 9:00 Ang Dating Daan 10:30 Q Showcase
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Home along the 'riles' –as it is in real life

By Noelani Torre

(Conclusion)

EVEN at their most desperate, Eddie and Pen maintain their dignity.

UNLIKE most documentaries, Ditsi Carolino's "Riles" is unnarrated. This makes for a loosely structured film unified by the strength of character of the central family's members, and the forceful impact of their milieu, which the filmmaker frames as honestly as possible.

Family

The family is composed of Eddie, Pen, and their five children—three of whom the couple adopted after their real mother was hit by a train. Eddie is a *balut* vendor and Pen irons and folds clothes. She is suffering from breast cancer.

What struck us from the very beginning of the documentary were the couple's centeredness and the sense of humor which they retained despite all the hardships in their life. "Home Along Da Riles" this is not, but we nevertheless found ourselves laughing at times—*with* the subjects, but not *at* them, which is the kind of laughter that slapstick can never inspire.

This is no romanticization of the poor; it is just that the filmmaker was fortunate enough to find a couple like Pen and Eddie who have not resorted to crime and drugs to ease their poverty. Even at their roughest—and they can get pretty rough—and at their most desperate, they maintain their dignity.

Attitude

It is an attitude that impresses us and shames us at the same time, we who are better off materially but who have not achieved their level of grace.

Pen and Eddie are not perfect—he drinks, and she nags too much. We see them at their worst and at their best, sometimes even at the same time, and this only serves to awaken our sympathy.

It reminds us that what we see on the screen is fact, not fiction, and that even if the filmmaker has already framed it, it nevertheless exists *beyond* that frame.

The absence of narration also means that we hear the voices of Pen, Eddie, and their children even more clearly. This is their story, not the filmmaker's, and it illustrates how mature Ditsi has become in her filmmaking.

"Riles" runs for only 70 minutes, but like all great films, documentaries and otherwise, this production will remain in your mind and heart for the longest time.

Healthy holidays

LOTUS POND

R. Valencia and S. Bismark

PEOPLE expect the Christmas season to be filled with happiness and joy. But some things ruin the Christmas spirit. We have listed holiday "busters" to avoid:

Pollutants

1. Air pollutants burden our respiratory system. Let's find healthier ways to celebrate the New Year than lighting mini-bombs that shatter the eardrums.

2. Deadly food comes from meat with high uric acid, sugar-filled desserts and fatty dishes. Celebration does not mean turning our backs on the principles of a healthy lifestyle. We have to avoid substances that damage the natural function of our organs.

3. Artificial drinks aren't good for our body. Fruit juices nourish, while artificially colored and flavored drinks only add chemical burdens to our system. Water is always better than any artificial drink.

4. Intoxicants can ruin the spirit of the holidays. Studies have shown how an alcoholic drink can destroy body organs and tissues.

Social drink

How can we afford to lose those precious brain cells? How can we sacrifice our liver cells for a social drink?

5. Nasty talk and gossip pollute the heart and mind. It is a season to be kind and generous, and a time to control our overly active imagination. Keep the tongue away from overeating, as well as from talking about other people's lives!

Email lotuspond108@hotmail.com

Seiko's 'Bridal Shower...

From page C2

More than anything, though, it's Jeturian's fresh, tight direction that makes the movie work. He uses flashbacks and graphics to show that the movie doesn't take itself too seriously.

Departure

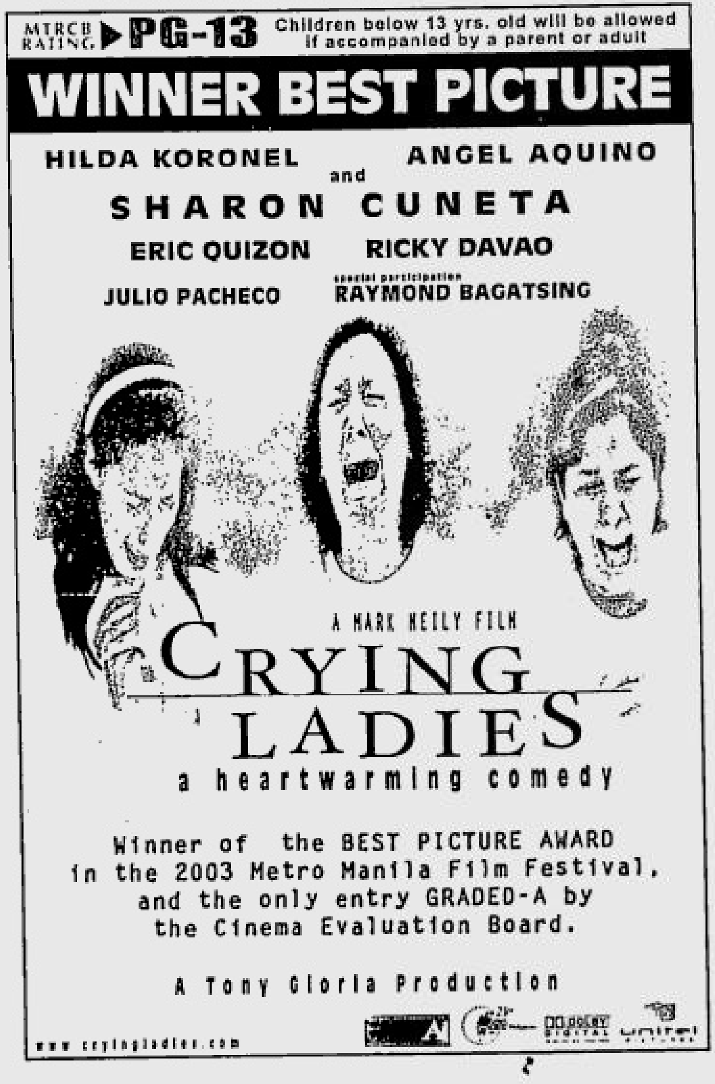
His film is a refreshing departure from distressingly maladroit romantic comedies that churn out similar themes all year long. It mostly stirs clear of the obvious sociopolitical commentaries used by some local directors, but when it does become relevant, the scenes don't appear forced and self-indulgent.

The movie has flaws: Why the need for a two-years-later epilogue just to give it the proverbial happy ending? If Sonia is in it for the money, why sign the pre-nup at all?

Charm and wit

Some "over-zealous" performances should have been toned down. Plus, a comedy should never be this long. But the film has more charm and wit going for it than most comedies.

We left the theater still chuckling over some scenes. If Robbie Tan's Seiko can't do away with naughty themes altogether, then it should at least make *good* naughty films—like "Bridal Shower"!



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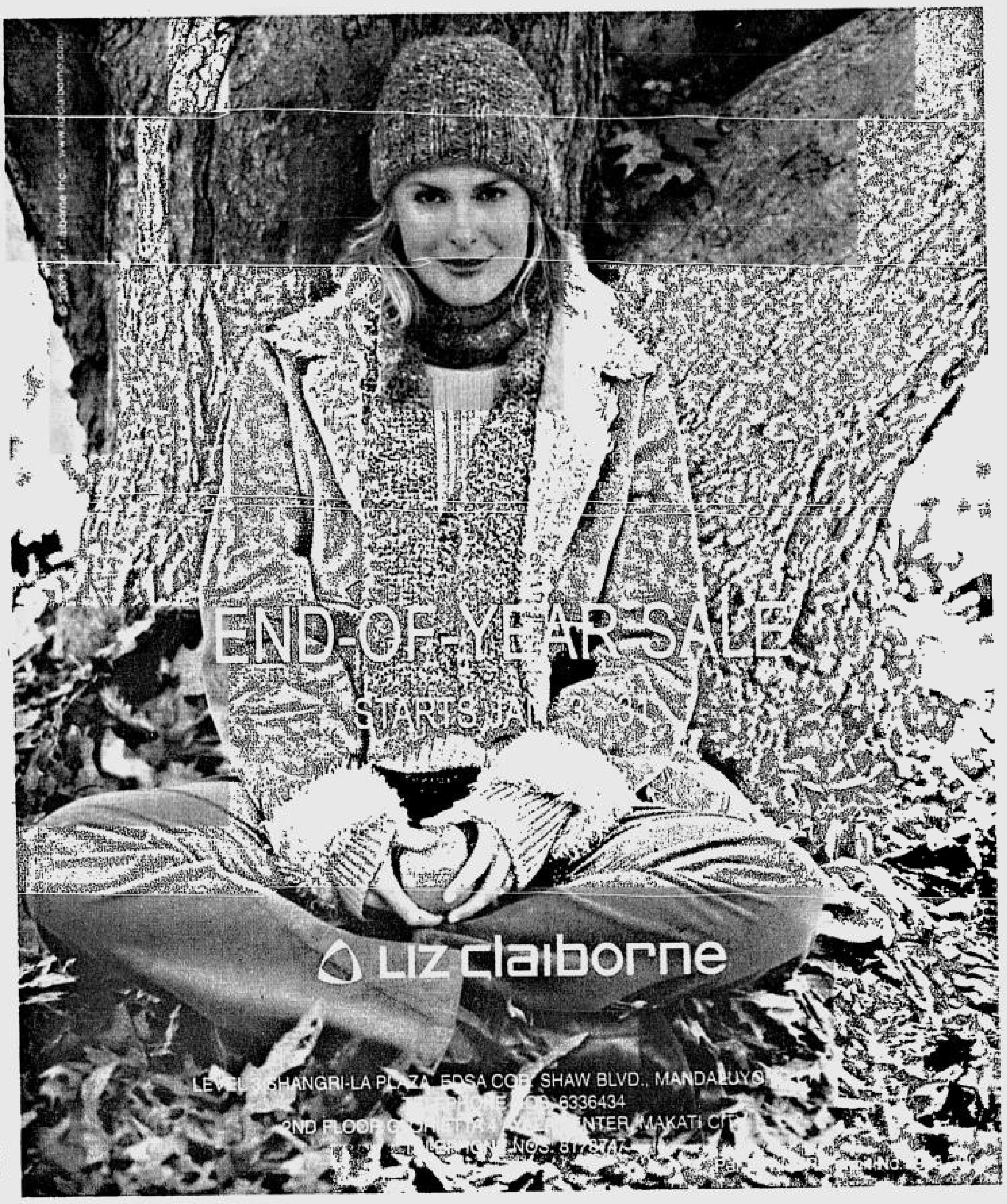

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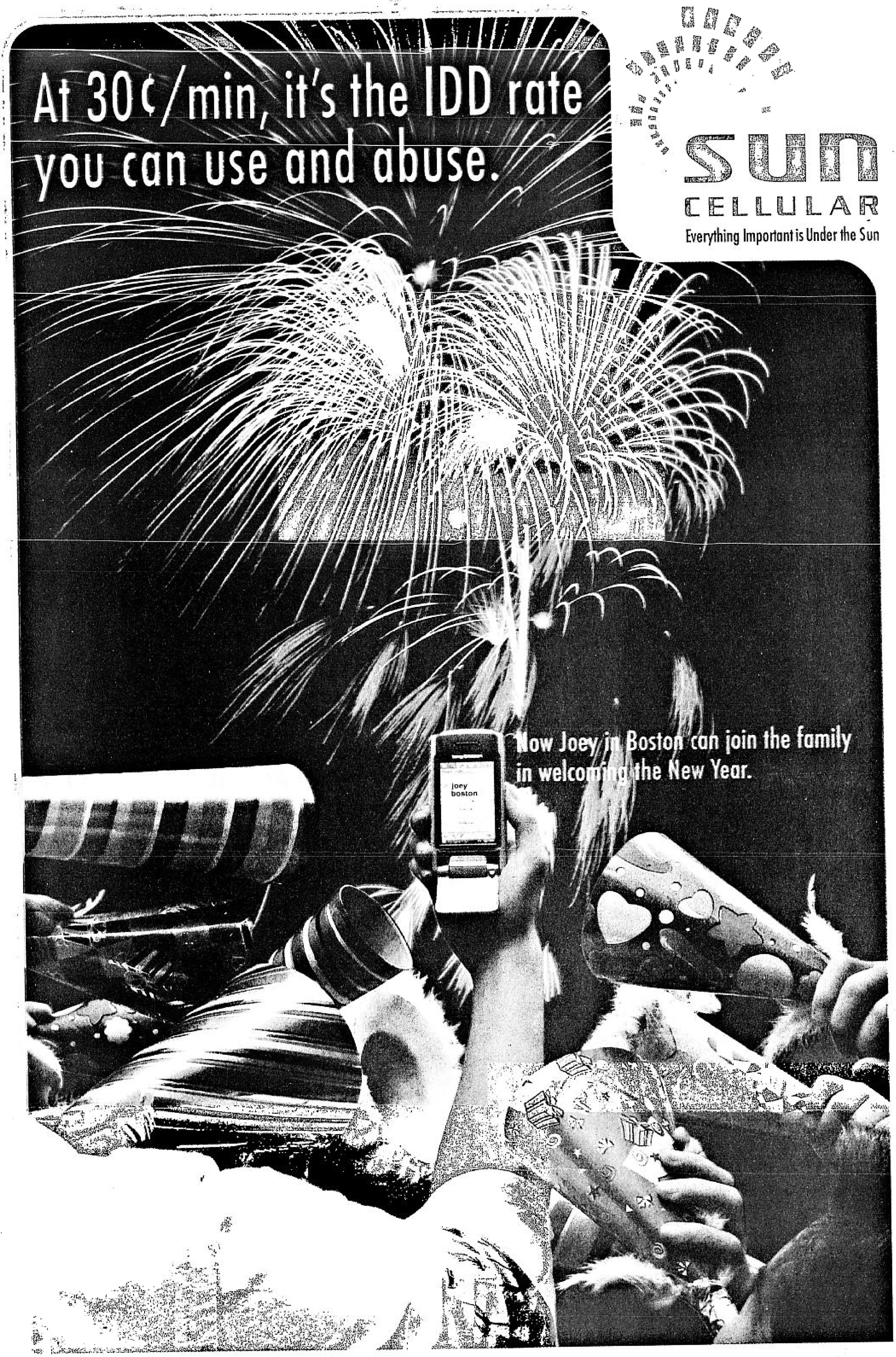

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24 shakers bound to give 2004 the big bang!

By Tim Yap

UPBEAT. That's what the start of the new year should be.

With big, big personalities on a political uphill climb in the first half of 2004, glitz biz stars will be most in demand. Funds are going to flow like water, more concert artists are going to hop by Manila, and even more names are sure to go up—or down the ladder as the cycle continues.

I see another hip resto coming out of the Greenbelt 4 woodwork. But I also see the Fort booming once again. R&B will remain the youth's music of choice, while the arts take up more space in their leisure calendar. Young movie directors will succeed at carving a niche in the industry and sensitive young thespians will get a fair share of tinseltown's spotlight.

Our Super! crystal ball sees 24 names—from show biz to high society, music to fashion, photography to film—24 movers that will give 2004 that much needed bang!

CHANGING/ D2

THESPIAN on top. Fiona Barranda

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 2755 Series of 2003

ALESSANDRA de Rossi. Finally, an *artista* unafrai to speak her mind

RICO Blanco lets he music ake control

MARK SAN DIEGO. The face that launched a thousand calls

MUSICAL marvel Savannah Lumen

PAOLO Pineda. Our answer to Herb Ritts.

JOHNNY Litton and Maurice Arcache. Oh yes, it's Johnny and Maurice for round two.

FOREVER is not enough for Sarah Geronimo.

BRENT Javier is hot, hot, hot.

Changing of the Guards

From page D1

STEPH Zubiri. More than just a pretty face

SARAH GERONIMO

Last year's discovery. Expect her star to shine even brighter this year, what with recording contracts, television shows and movies already tucked under her belt. Show biz insiders say she's the new Regine Velasquez, so let's wait and see exactly what this Star for a Night is made of.

VHONG NAVARRO

Another hero for the masses, Vhong played a spider and a mustachioed Mr. Suave, and danced his way to Pinoy audiences' hearts. More tricks seem to be up his Spidey sleeve this year.

ALEX ESCAT

The girl who launched a million Pond's creams and made us "*Sige na*, indulge!" with Magnolia continues to sizzle as one of Cal Carrie's (agency) star models. Will she be the next über model? Don't doubt it.

STEPH ZUBIRI

All former "it" girls and pretenders, watch out. Steph is here to claim the throne. Back from studies in Paris, this chef (who had a successful guest stint at Resto 12 last month), writer and ultimate "it" girl is headed straight for stardom. It's in the genes, baby.

AKAFELLAS. Always in tune and making waves.

SEXY Jay-R's got the grooves and the moves

RICHARD Gutierrez, the next Aga Mulach

GRETCHEN from the block

VHONG Navarro. Suave *talaga*.

BRENT JAVIER

Wherever Brent goes, girls scream. When he won the MTV Fashionista contest last year, even guys screamed. This year, he competes for the international Manhunt. Let's cross our fingers that people across the globe would get a turn to work their throats hoarse.

MARK MEILLY

He was proclaimed "Best Director" in the Metro Manila film fest for his "Crying Ladies," starring Angel Aquino, Hilda Koronel and Sharon Cuneta. His shift from commercials to full-length feature films gives him technical advantage over his peers. Definitely one to watch.

ERIK MATTI

Even if he didn't get the trophy, Erik's "Mano Po 2" is worthy of Orient-wide ovation. Plus, with Mother Lily's unabashed confidence in this young filmmaker, he has nowhere to go but up ... up and away!

NIKKI MUELLER

Kids are always a great captive market. That's exactly what Nikki has captured, worldwide. Being Disney's prime female VJ, this German-Filipina may be the next Donita.

JAY R

He made young urban Pinoys appreciate local R&B and has since been jiggying with the charts and front-acting for class acts such as Gary V. He also dabbles in acting, starring in GMA-7 soaps, and is a regular at SOP. He's bald, he's bold. He makes us want to raise the roof ... higher.

AKAFELLAS

They brought the house down as front act in last year's Mariah Carey Charmbracelet World Tour and continue to make waves in the local music scene with their distinct, hip beat, a cappella. They are this generation's answer to The Tux, and better-looking at that. I can only say one thing: "Bongga Ka Day!"

JOHNNY LITTON AND MAURICE ARCACHE

Just like Schwarzennegger, they'll be back—on TV this time, to entertain RPN-9 viewers, dahlings. Oh yes, oh yes, I'll scream it out loud, without batting an eyelash.

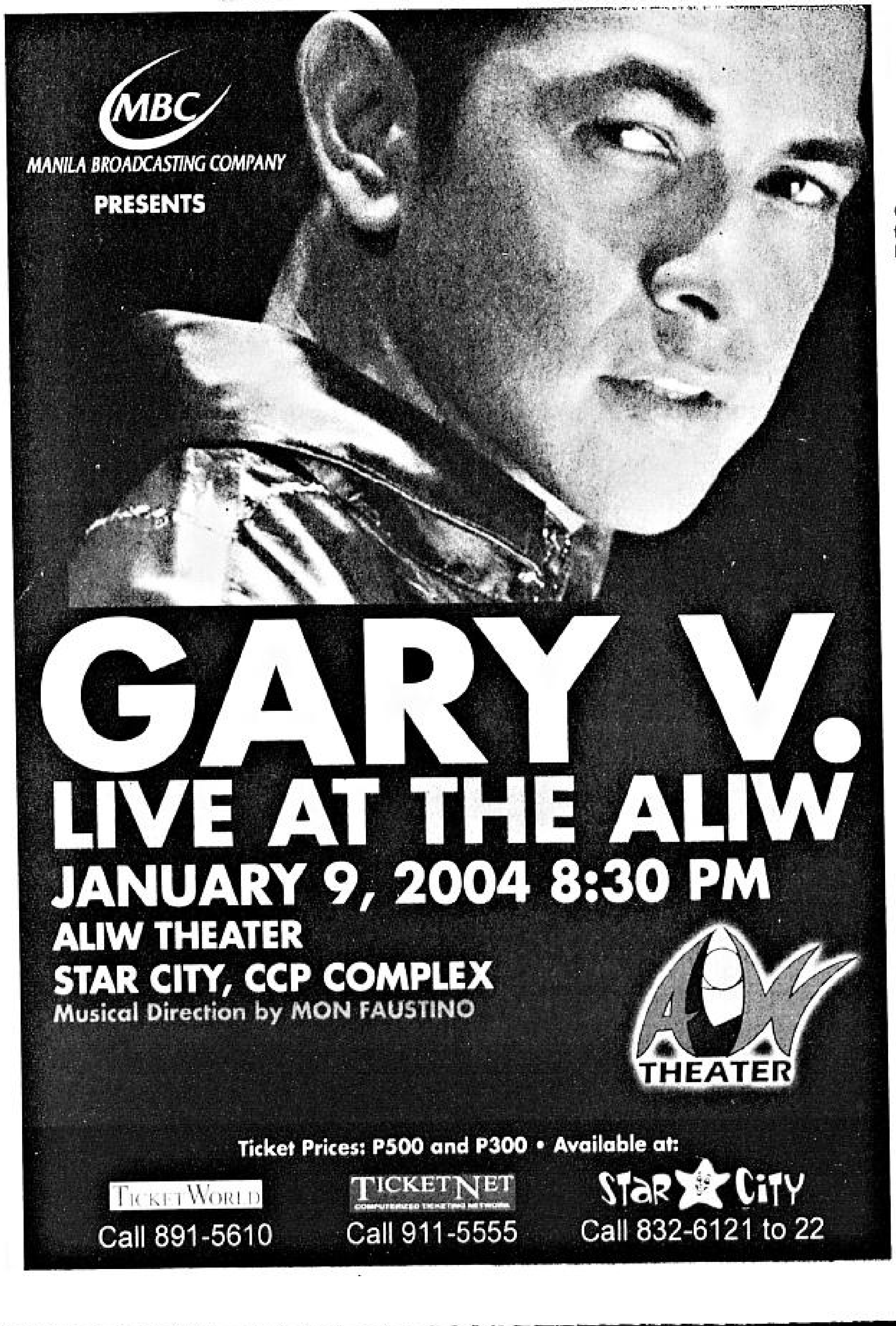
ALESSANDRA DA ROSSI

At a "ripe old" age, she has exhibited sensitivity as an actress and raw honesty as a celebrity. Refreshingly candid yet respectable, this attractive *morena* is a prime example of what a young, hip Pinay should be.

FIONA BARRANDA

Her acting talent shone in last year's the-

CHANGING/ D3



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Changing of the Guards

From page D2

Our Super! crystal ball says 2004 is the year for these twenty-four people to shine

atrical hit, "Urinetown" at the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium. This year, she is in Atlantis' staging of "Baby" with Lea Salonga, and "West Side Story." We hope to see more of her in these exciting, world-class productions.

TANIA PAULSEN

You've seen her everywhere, from liquor billboards to fashion shows. She's even co-hosted "Eat Bulaga." Now you'll hear her sing, as she will soon release her first album. This Fil-Australian stunner will definitely steal a lot of hearts along the way.

RICHARD GUTIERREZ

Many were impressed with his suicide scene in "Mano Po 2." He may yet be the best actor to come out of the Gutierrez household. His Bench endorsement contract, forever famous sis Ruffa, and good looks inherited from daddy Eddie and mom Annabelle are guaranteed pluses, too.

PAOLO PINEDA

This young photographer is top choice for Super!'s cover shoots. Aside from that, you see his work all over Summit publications. He is brilliant, young, open to higher learning, and a joy to work with. Enough said.

MARK NAVAL, BENJO MARQUEZ AND JON HERRERA

Three deejays climbing up the marquee in terms of musical following. Mark Naval has DJ Tuck Cheah of Big Fish's nod. Benjo is a constant crowd drawer and now, image model of Rustan's U Republic. Jon Herrera (aka Johnny Verse) draws a beautiful, R&B grinding crowd with his mixes of Eminem intertwined with Vanilla Ice, and the occasional Milli Vannilli.

RICO BLANCO

This year will be his year, what with new singles and videos to be released, aside from all the feathers off his Rivermaya hat. About time. The young singer and composer has integrity at his core and music in his soul.

SAVANNAH LUMEN

With a cult following among those who prefer music that soothes, Savannah is recording her own album after a series of sold-out lounge performances last year. She sings with depth that betrays her baby-face, doll-like features. And oh, she writes all her songs, too.

IVARLUSKI ASERON

Young design genius can turn an ordinary jacket into an avant garde masterpiece. If the global fashion market has Mc Queen, we have Ivarluski right here. Yes, remember the name.

GRETCHEN BARRETTO

Okay, don't be fooled by the rocks. Expect Gretchen to prove she's worth more than her diamonds, as she lends her Midas Touch to hubby Tonyboy Cojuangco's latest acquisition, ABC 5. Watch out for Greta from the block.

MARK SAN DIEGO

When he appeared on our Super! pages via the Superfriends, many called and texted to ask who the Piolo Pascual deadringer was. The last time we received that many calls was when Jon Hall first appeared in 2bu! You be the judge.

MARTIN WISNIEWSKI

The guy who won the bid for that much-coveted café space in Greenbelt 4 (which reportedly had big "brand" names in the resto industry bidding for it as well). Next year, he opens the resto tentatively called "Studio" for the Gucci and LV set. I'm sure the brand-conscious all want to sing in chorus—"I'm so excited! And I just can't hide it!"

ERIK CUA

Yes, he owns Greenbelt hotspot Temple and Basement and Jack's Loft in Libis—all topnotchers in their respective niches. This year, Erik sets his sights on a new venture—something Manila needs oh-so-badly. Can it be a world-class club? It remains a secret. Expect the unexpected from this new prince on the nightlife block.

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Parokya ni Edgar
Bigotilyo
RINGTONE: N1
POLYTONE: T1
WALLPAPER: C1
LYRICS: LY1

Mandy
Westlife
Turnaround
RINGTONE: N2
POLYTONE: T2
WALLPAPER: C2
LYRICS: LY2

SUGABABES
Three

Hole In The Head
Sugababes
Three
RINGTONE: N3
POLYTONE: T3
WALLPAPER: C3
LYRICS: LY3

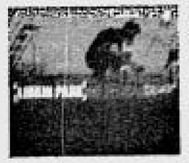
NELLY FURTADO

Powerless
Nelly Furtado
Folklore
RINGTONE: N4
POLYTONE: T4
WALLPAPER: C4
LYRICS: LY4

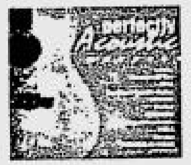
Hey Ya
Outkast
Speaker Boxxx/The Love Below
RINGTONE: N5
POLYTONE: T5
WALLPAPER: C5
LYRICS: LY5

It's My Life
No Doubt
The Singles
RINGTONE: N6
POLYTONE: T6
WALLPAPER: C6
LYRICS: LY6

I Promise
Stacie Orrico
Stacie Orrico
RINGTONE: N7
POLYTONE: T7
WALLPAPER: C7
LYRICS: LY7



From The Inside
Linkin Park
Meteora
RINGTONE: N8
POLYTONE: T8
WALLPAPER: C8
LYRICS: LY8



Because Of You
Kyla
Perfectly Acoustic
RINGTONE: N9
POLYTONE: T9
WALLPAPER: C9
LYRICS: LY9

Time Stands Still
The All American Rejects
The All American Rejects
RINGTONE: N10
POLYTONE: T10
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LYRICS: LY10

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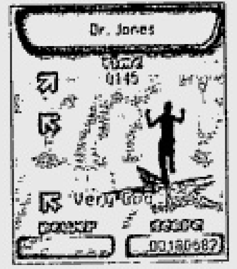

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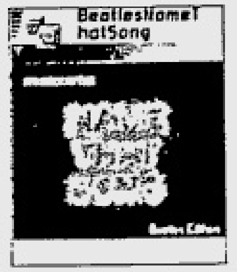

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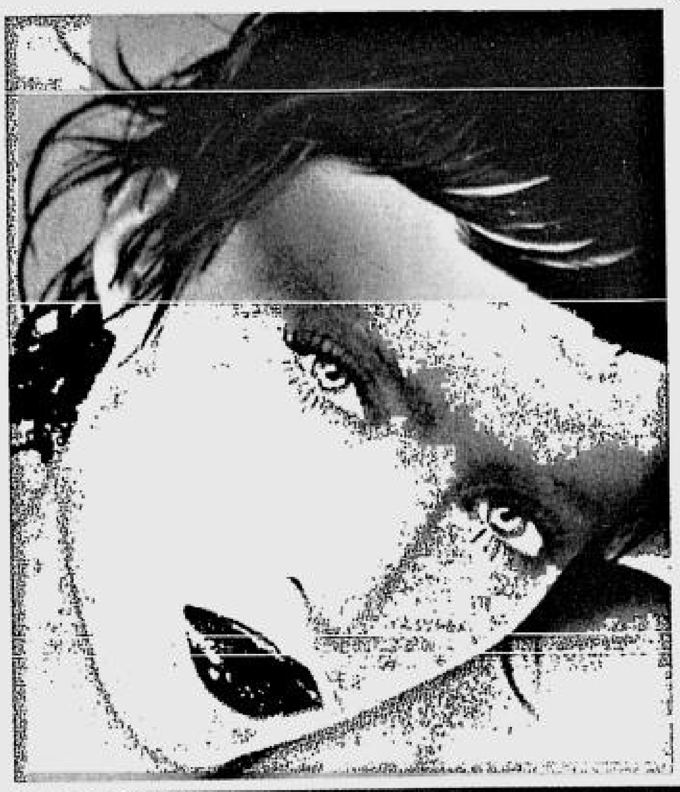

L'ORÉAL
Of Poets & peasants

By Gino de la Paz and Tals Diaz

TO BE both a POET and a PEASANT, this simple yet thought provoking mantra sums up an ideal that is exclusive to L'OREAL. "Here at L'oreal," says Thierry Prevot, L'Oreal's Director-General, Asia-Japan, "we have a saying that we want people who are both "poets and peasants. The peasant works everyday, he looks at the sun, at the clouds, to make things happen. The poet is a dreamer, a visionary. If you are both, then you can understand what L'Oreal is about." This underlying conviction is manifested fully in L'Oreal's corporate culture where creativity merges seamlessly with an acute business sense.

A decade ago, a famous taste-shaping blonde summed up her own take on attractiveness by saying "Beauty is where you find it." More than cribbing another cliché, that pop star was right on the money. The concept of beauty, especially in these accelerated times, is a Rorschach test

POETS/ 2

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Evan P. Ragandang
Rhea De Vera
Hans Yao
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University ties
Page 4

SPOTLIGHT ON WOMEN:
The L'Oréal-UNESCO partnership

"L'OREAL'S commitment alongside UNESCO in the FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE partnership is a concrete expression of our firm intention to promote women in scientific research and to participate in the creation of new vocations throughout the world." (Lindsay Owen-Jones, chairman and CEO, L'OREAL)

"The commitment of a group such as L'OREAL alongside an organization like UNESCO is a perfect example of the sort of partnership which we can engage in with the private sector."

(Koichiro Matsuura, Director- General of UNESCO)

Among the top scientific prizes, the For Women in Science (FWIS) program is uniquely positioned as it is the only one to be dedicated to women scientists and re-

UNESCO/ 2

Lindsay Owen-Jones, Chairman and CEO, L'OREAL

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L'ORÉAL

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Then imagine [illegible] could express your creativity, your entrepreneurial spirit [illegible] within one of our cross-cultural teams. And share their passion for beauty, innovation and conquering new markets.

Join an open-minded, global group and you will benefit from [illegible] responsibility, [illegible] training, [illegible] gained with worldwide [illegible], a personal development plan and [illegible] mobility including a lot of international opportunities. More than skills, L'Oreal is looking for people with personality and ideas. [illegible] of those who will shape L'Oreal's future all over the world. [illegible] L'Oreality.

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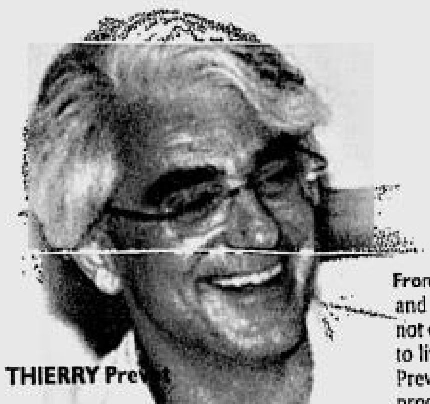
Of poets & peasan



THIERRY Pre

From page 1

of sorts. With its promise of chameleon-like transformations, beauty products have become as fundamental as bottled water. Most of the time, however, these godsends are merely regarded as Band-Aids that extend our ability to alter our outward features and nothing more.

L'Oréal is a company that dares to redefine the business of beauty by going beyond skin-deep perceptions and celebrating the diversity of physical appearances. Their approach is undeniably holistic. The global cosmetics leader works from the inside out.

Extremely inspiring as he is stylish, Mr. Thierry Prevot is tasked with extending L'Oréal's unique vision in the Asian region. Resembling a French Sensei in an impeccable silk jacket, Mr. Prevot is mindful that we are in a new era of options. Most people may try on identities like they try on clothes, but his 18 years with the company have taught him that integrity is the essence of everything, most especially at L'Oréal. He shares that L'Oréal is a brand that represents the unique intersection of creativity and commerce, where you can both dream and work.

Prevot himself embodies panache upon first encounter; exuding charisma and demanding undivided attention as he reflects on L'Oreal's celebration of the diversity of beauty. One is enlightened on the deeper attributes of the global cosmetics enterprise as not simply a venture solely concerned with the flagrant accumulation of profit. It runs far deeper than that, for behind L'Oreal lies a solid backbone of core values that remain the foundation of continued growth and unparalleled success.

Integrity has always been the essence of the L'Oreal group," expresses Prevot. "The values of this company reflect my own values. When you do not agree with the values of your company, you will be at a discomfort. After working in this company for the past 18 years, I fully believe and share in these same values."

Prevot cites certain key values that he believes are the substance of the dynamic L'Oreal group. Honesty, factual strength and once again, the emphasis that money is not everything---quite an unusual principle to live by in the global competitive sphere. Prevot stands firm in his conviction that product quality supersedes profit. "We are not ready to sacrifice people or the quality of the brands for profit. We won't accept profit if we think it is bad for the brand, bad for the people, or most importantly, bad for ethics. A lot of companies are only profit-oriented, we are not like that, and yet we are extremely profitable!" An astounding performance in the past years only proves his beaming assertion, as the L'Oreal group is the only cosmetic company in the world who boasts of showing double-digit growth for their 18th consecutive year. "This is spectacular," Prevot notes, "We are a very unique company in the world with a very unique model of growth."

Prevot attributes the loyalty of people and likewise, the top management's loyalty to their people as the absolute strength of the L'Oreal group. "We believe in the need to build on people for them to honor us with their utmost loyalty." As such, people continue to be the strength behind L'Oreal's outstanding success.

Prevot believe in the importance of employing people exhibiting creativity and sensitivity, and yet grounded in a sense of autonomy and entrepreneurship. "We don't want the profile of a robot!" he adds. "We need to recruit more people who are creative than any other company. We need people who have sensitivity, are open-minded, creative and artistic people, grounded with a good business sense."

Prevot himself is a virtual embodiment of his corporate philosophy. As an alumnus of a prestigious business school in Paris, he admits that he always made time to pursue his other passions in relation to aesthetic, creative endeavors, from oil painting, composing his own music, writing poetry and attending art school. "I love modern and abstract art. For me, art is a way of life. Everything serves as an inspiration to me, and my mind is always open to everything". Yet, he humbly claims, "I am not an artist, but for me, this just proves that I am not totally 'closed' ---my eyes are open to the cultures of the world and it always helps me in how I express my feelings. How to understand the diversity of beauty and the sense of aesthetism. I believe everybody has to find his own balance in that."

Traveling is yet another endeavor that Thierry Prevot readily admits to being what he terms as his breathing space. "I always feel I become 'stronger' when I go back to my headquarters, after my travels. It gives me flexibility; traveling allows me to "breathe" L'Oreal people more." His diversity and open-mindedness is likewise shown in his choice of music. In his last peripatetic sojourn, he shares that he always chooses ten CDs at random, from all over the world. The resulting melange was Guiseppe Verdi, Chinese, Arab and Egyptian music and Leo Ferre (an international French poet). "I have the world with me. I can go from one world to another just by listening to music."

That doctrine of creativity and commerce governs Prevot's favorable observation of the positive attribute of Asian managers as compared to European managers. That is, possessing a keen sense of detail, which ultimately translates to the pursuit of perfection. Quality is achieved because of the attribute of being self-demanding, ultimately leading to endeavours well done. "Because of this sense of detail, they have a true sense of the brands, they have a good sense of branding and excellent PR skills."

Pausing to reflect on his outward revelations, Prevot offers as a parting shot: "Quality requires honesty and self-control. Every job means an opportunity to learn new things, and work is always a continuous discovery of who I am. Work teaches you to be self-demanding; it is a means of self-improvement. A passion for products entails energy, or the power to be. Energy---this is one of the most fantastic qualities of people. It is the source of all dynamism in people."

There lies yet another revelation of L'Oreal's continued understanding of the ever-changing conception of beauty: a genuine belief that beyond a ravishing face lies the continued pursuit of seeking true inspiration in an exquisite, dynamic world.

Nurture Master

By [illegible]

THE STEADY growth of L'Oréal in the Philippines is a product of teamwork and zest for challenge among its talented pool of personnel. Those who find themselves in this culturally diverse company, are in it for a real life adventure while learning the ropes of making it happen in the business of beauty.

So if you're plans include learning the business of global branding, look no further than L'Oreal, a company whose global performance has been both stellar and steady through the years. Last year alone, L'Oreal Group earned 14Billion euros in sales and continues its double digit growth in profit over the last 18 years. Represented by barely half of its brands in the Philippines; LOREAL PROFESSIONNEL, KERASTASE PARIS, GARNIER, LOREAL PARIS, MAYBELLINE NEW YORK, LANCOME, GIORGIO ARMANI and RALPH LAUREN (fragrances), CACHAREL, SHU UEMURA with its outstanding track record it is clear that the world's largest cosmetic company has more up its sleeve for the Philippines.

GETTING INTO L'OREAL

In an industry, where consumer feedback counts a lot, L'Oréal is quite selective-and cautious-with the people they take into their wings. Hence a 'strong understanding of the market' ranks one of the most important things to consider when selecting its people, according to L'Oréal Philippines country manager Paul-Henri Duillet.

Given this, once management sees potential in the person, they make it a point to extract and nurture their personnel's talents further and are more than willing to take a risk on that individual. Risk would mean giving the person an opportunity to expand his or her potentials - such as moving a person into a totally different field from what the person initially applied for.

"I have interviewed managers for a sales position and ended up putting them into marketing positions with great success." Says Duillet. In this company, career evolutions depend on the individual's ability to understand, interact, propose and implement. Thus careers in L'Oreal are never standardized but individualized.

DAY ONE

Duillet uses the following metaphor to describe how things work at L'Oreal. "Imagine each working division as a boat with a captain and a crew, if the crew is not working together with the captain to sail that boat, the boat will never get anywhere." The concept of managers as captains given their own boats to sail within a bigger fleet is how L'OREAL empowers its people to lead. Each captain has his own boat to

MASTER/ K4

PAUL-Henri Duillet

The L'Oréal-UNESCO partnership

From page 1

warding researchers under extremely varying conditions, by allocating awards/fellowships for each continent of the world.

The program has two types of awards:

The L'OREAL - UNESCO AWARD is now at par with the greatest scientific honors in the world as it recognizes 5 remarkable women researchers annually from (AFRICA, ASIA-PACIFIC, EUROPE, LATIN AMERICA and NORTH AMERICA) with a grant of ($100,000). This award highlights their achievements and holds them up as role models for an entire generation of young women. With 2003 awards, 26 scientists from 23 countries have been recognized.

The UNESCO - L'OREAL FELLOWSHIP encourages young women scientists to pursue their research in the laboratory of their choice. In order to give more breadth to the program and increase impact on the world of science, the number of fellowships, and their value, was increased in 2003. Now 15 women are awarded ($20,000) fellowships (three for each of the 5 regions of the world: AFRICA, ARAB STATES, ASIA/PACIFIC, EUROPE/NORTH AMERICA and LATIN AMERICA). Since its inception it has distinguished a total of 45 young scientists from more than 35 countries.

Background

On 29 September 1999, L'ORÉAL and UNESCO committed themselves "through mutual, concerted cooperation, to carry out joint projects which would benefit the situation of women on an international scale in general and in their scientific work in particular" (extract from the partnership agreement signed by L'ORÉAL and UNESCO).

On 17 October 2002, this partnership was strengthened. The Executive Council of UNESCO approved the decision to qualify the program as the L'ORÉAL-UNESCO Award (no longer simply the L'ORÉAL AWARD with the support of UNESCO). This decision illustrates the determination of UNESCO to further involve itself in this partnership, which has been regarded as a model by many of its member states.

The working relationship between UNESCO and L'ORÉAL is a first which is rich in resonance: it is an affirmation by the business world of its responsibility to forge scientific progress, and a recognition by the world of government of the positive contribution which business makes to the big issues of tomorrow's world.

Further Information

Please contact the L'OREAL-UNESCO AWARDS 2004 Executive Secretariat:

L'OREAL: Contact L'OREAL, Centre Eugene Schueller, 41, rue Martre, 92117 CLICHY CEDEX, FRANCE. Attention: ELIZABETH GAVARD, tel: 33 1 47 56 86 69, fax: 33 1 47 56 42 59, or email egavard@dgc.loreal.com

UNESCO: 1, rue Miollis, 75015 PARIS, FRANCE. Attention: RENEE CLAIR, tel: 33 1 45 68 36 10, fax: 33 1 45 68 58 18. Or email r.clair@unesco.org

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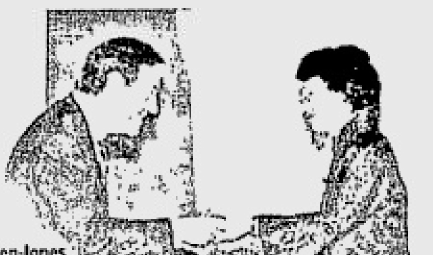

Owen-Jones awarding Dr. Li, 2003 For Women in Science Awards, Paris

L' O R É A L PARIS

Happy New Year from L' Oréal

In 2004, L'Oréal wishes to make your beauty dreams real. For L'Oréal laboratories, beauty comes from science—2,700 researchers throughout the world take out 440 patents every year so that every day you can fulfill your beauty dreams.

Because You're Worth It.

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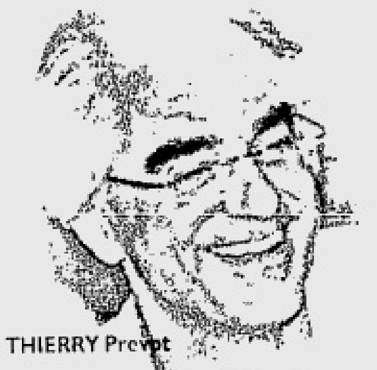

THIERRY Prevot

of [illegible]. With its promise of chameleon-like transformation, [illegible] beauty products have become [illegible] fundamental as bottled water. Most of the time, however, these [illegible] are merely regarded as Band-Aids that extend our ability [illegible] the outward features and nothing more.

L'Oréal is a company that dares to redefine the business of beauty by going beyond skin-deep perceptions and celebrating the diversity of physical appearances. Their approach is undeniably holistic. The global cosmetics leader works from the inside out.

Extremely inspiring as he is stylish, Mr. Thierry Prevot is tasked with extending L'Oréal's unique vision in the Asian region. Resembling a French Sensei in an impeccable silk jacket, Mr. Prevot is mindful that we are in a new era of options. Most people may try on identities like they try on clothes, but his 18 years with the company have taught him that integrity is the essence of everything, most especially at L'Oréal. He shares that L'Oreal is a brand that represents the unique intersection of creativity and commerce, where [illegible] both dream and work.

Prevot himself embodies panache upon first encounter, exuding charisma and demanding undivided attention [illegible] on L'Oreal's celebration of the diverse beauty. One is enlightened on the attributes of the global [illegible] prise is not simply a venture [illegible] cerned with the flagrant accumulation of profit. It runs far deeper than that, for behind L'Oreal lies a solid backbone [illegible] that remain the foundation [illegible] tinued growth and unparalleled success.

Integrity has always been the essence of the L'Oreal group," expresses Prevot. "The values of this company reflect my own values. When you do not agree with the values of your company, you will be at a discomfort. After working in this company for the past 18 years, I fully believe and share in these same [illegible]."

Prevot cites certain key values that he believes are the substance of the dynamic L'Oreal group. Honesty, factual strength

From page [illegible]

and once again, the emphasis that money is not everything—quite an unusual principle to live by in the global competitive sphere. Prevot stands firm in his conviction that product quality supersedes profit. "We are not ready to sacrifice people or the quality of the brands for profit. We won't accept profit if we think it is bad for the brand, bad for the people, or most importantly, bad for ethics. A lot of companies are only profit-oriented, we are not like that, and yet we are extremely profitable!" An astounding performance in the past years only proves his beaming assertion, as the L'Oreal group is the only cosmetic company in the world who boasts of showing double-digit growth for their 18th consecutive year. "This is spectacular," Prevot notes. "We are a very unique company in the world with [illegible] unique model of growth."

Prevot attributes the loyalty of people and likewise the top management's loyalty to their people as the absolute strength of the L'Oreal group. "We believe in the need to build on people for them to honor us with their utmost loyalty." As such, people continue to be the strength behind L'Oreal's outstanding success.

Prevot believes in the importance of employing people exhibiting creativity and sensitivity and yet grounded in a sense of autonomy and entrepreneurship. "We do not want the profile of a robot!" he adds. "We [illegible] more people who are [illegible] their company. We [illegible] sensitivity, [illegible] open-[illegible] and artistic people grounded with a good business sense."

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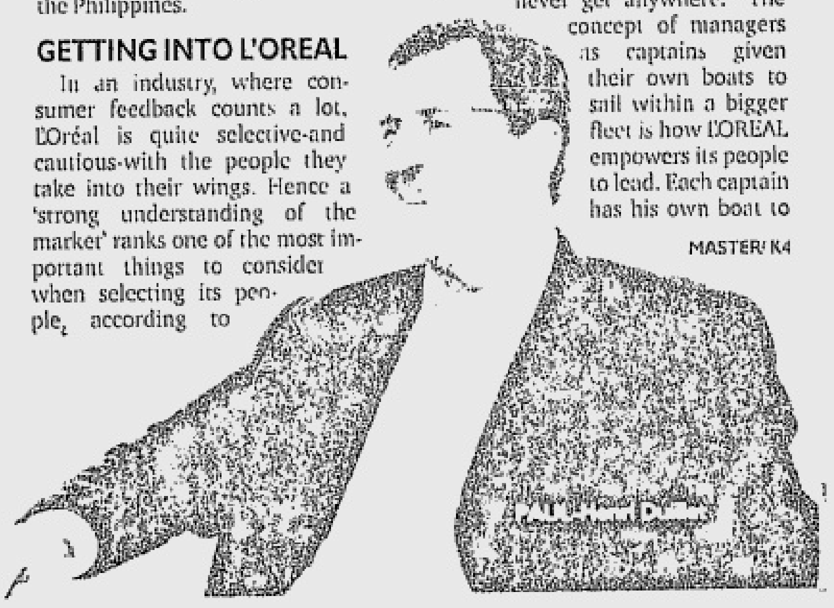

MASTER/ K4

From pag

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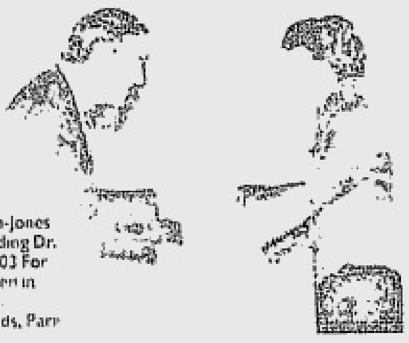
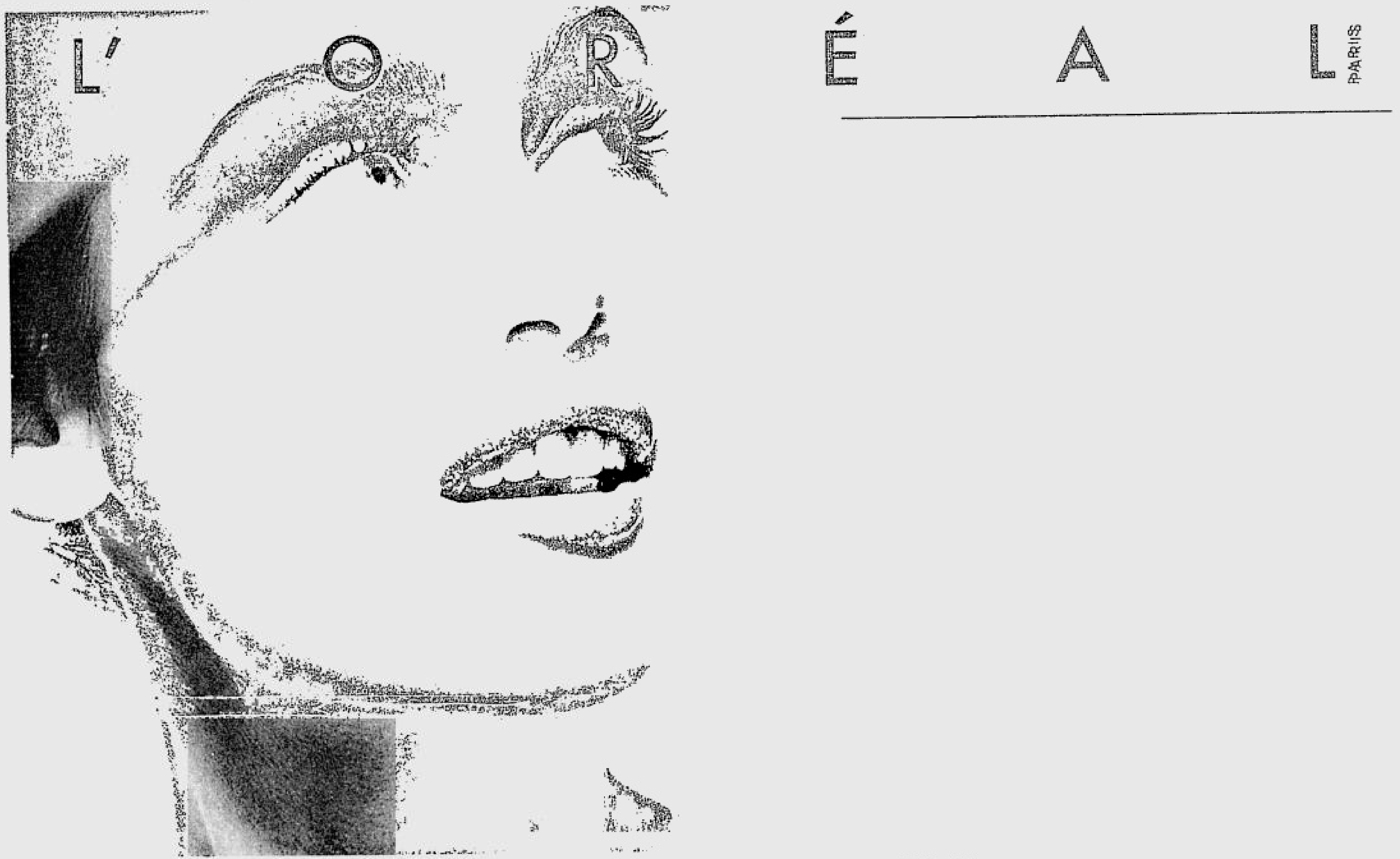
Further Information

[illegible] L'OREAL AWARDS 2004 [illegible]



Owen-Jones awarding Dr. L. 2003 For Women in Science Awards, Paris



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It's My Loreality

Qit Abola

General Manager
Administration and Finance Division (1 year and a half)

"THE FILIPINO can be world-class," says Qit Abola, General Manager for Administration & Finance.

Abola's assignments in Asia and the United States exposed him to international cultures and standards. In every place, he saw Filipinos exhibiting the ability to meet and exceed these standards.

And this was not limited to seasoned Filipino executives. "It was always a joy to observe many young Filipinos tackling and resolving issues with other nationalities on an equal basis," says Abola. "The added-value attributable to these 'kids' was always obvious and appreciated."

But despite a thriving international career, Qit Abola chose to come back home. He wants to raise his family in the Philippines. "In every country we were assigned, my family was always welcome. We were guests to wonderful hosts. But the prospect of raising and educating our kids outside of the Philippines was very difficult to even consider. So the choice between career and family was very easy to make."

The challenge to build a world-class organization from a small subsidiary "start-up" is what nudged him to join L'Oreal over other companies upon his return to the country. But beyond this challenge, Abola believes that sharing the same values with the company he is working for is very important. Remembering his initial conversation with L'Oreal executives before he was hired, Abola said L'Oreal values could be summarized in one word: respect. Respect for the country where they operate, for consumers, for employees, for our brands and for the shareholders. Those values, which are consistent with his own, are why he is now with L'Oreal.

"When there is a tough decision to make in the company we go back to the fundamentals... our values," said Abola who worked for 13 years in another global consumer products company before joining L'Oreal.

"Driving your car," an expression Abola picked up in L'Oreal, is an adequate metaphor of how they do things in the company. "It basically means taking responsibility for your actions." This does not mean working completely independent of everyone else; that would be chaos. Rather, it means delivering what is expected of you.

And the expectations are high. Successful companies in the cosmetics business constantly face high standards. These standards then cascade down from the company to its employees. Those who are able to anticipate, to learn and to change to meet these standards will be successful. "That's being world-class."

Rhea De Vera

Business Unit Manager
Lancome Paris (4 Years)

"FALL in love with your brand." This line aptly describes how passionate L'Oreal people are with their jobs.

Rhea de Vera who is currently in a short-term assignment in Singapore defines her job with L'Oreal as, "exciting, challenging, full of surprises and extremely fulfilling." Her current 'six month work-training assignment' allows her to learn hands-on brand management by working with a team from another country. This 'short-term assignment' is unique to L'Oreal. Not only does De Vera learn best practices from one of L'Oreal top Asian Luxury teams, she also gets a taste of life in another country. After this assignment, she will be able to share with her Philippine team effective real life business solutions, which no classroom lectures or degrees can ever equal.

In her five years with L'Oreal, she has come to learn the beauty business by heart. And why not, De Vera handled over three brands in all those years with the company. De Vera started as product manager for consumer division, handling Maybelline. This is where she was able to develop her marketing skills. Afterwards, she was assigned to the Luxury Products Division as business unit manager for RALPH LAUREN, GIORGIO ARMANI, CACHAREL and GUY LAROCHE (L'Oreal's fragrance brands). She considers her experience there as key learning years. De Vera had the opportunity to handle all aspects of the business, which included sales, marketing and finance.

Due to the fast pace and intense competitiveness that comprises the multi-billion dollar beauty industry De Vera cautions that, "Keeping cool is key especially when multiple deadlines and demanding quotas are being thrown at you. It becomes critical not to get distracted and stay focused."

De Vera's 'coolness under pressure' was tested earlier this year as she fought hard to hold onto the leadership of her fragrance brands when the category suffered a major decline this year. "For us (the team), what made the difference was the commitment, energy, and strong belief in our products," she said.

The youthful De Vera regards L'Oreal as a very dynamic and action-oriented company. "People tend to think it is all glamour, but we actually like to get our hands dirty," she said. "Because that is how we actually learn here." By getting their hands dirty this means, being constantly in touch with their products. De Vera makes it a point to know not only the facts and figures of her brands but the feel and scent of each of her products.

Many opportunities are available for people at L'Oreal, but they have to seek it out. An example of this is by networking with their global counterparts and sharing the best practices they have. "Why reinvent the wheel or the boat for that matter, early this year for the launch of POLO BLUE I chose not to build from scratch a 40 feet yacht but instead had one shipped from another country, as they had launched one month earlier." says De Vera.

In the end, says De Vera, "It boils down to no compromises, oftentimes it's too easy to opt for the fastest satisfactory solution, but not at L'Oreal, I can't count the number of time I have had suppliers work overtime repainting furniture on holidays-birthdays-vacations at the eleventh hour because the colour was not absolutely perfect. This may sound extreme but if you really love what you do, you won't think twice in going for that extra mile to make your business better-that's just another day at L'Oreal."

Evan P. Ragandang

Stock Control Manager
Consumer Division (8 Months)

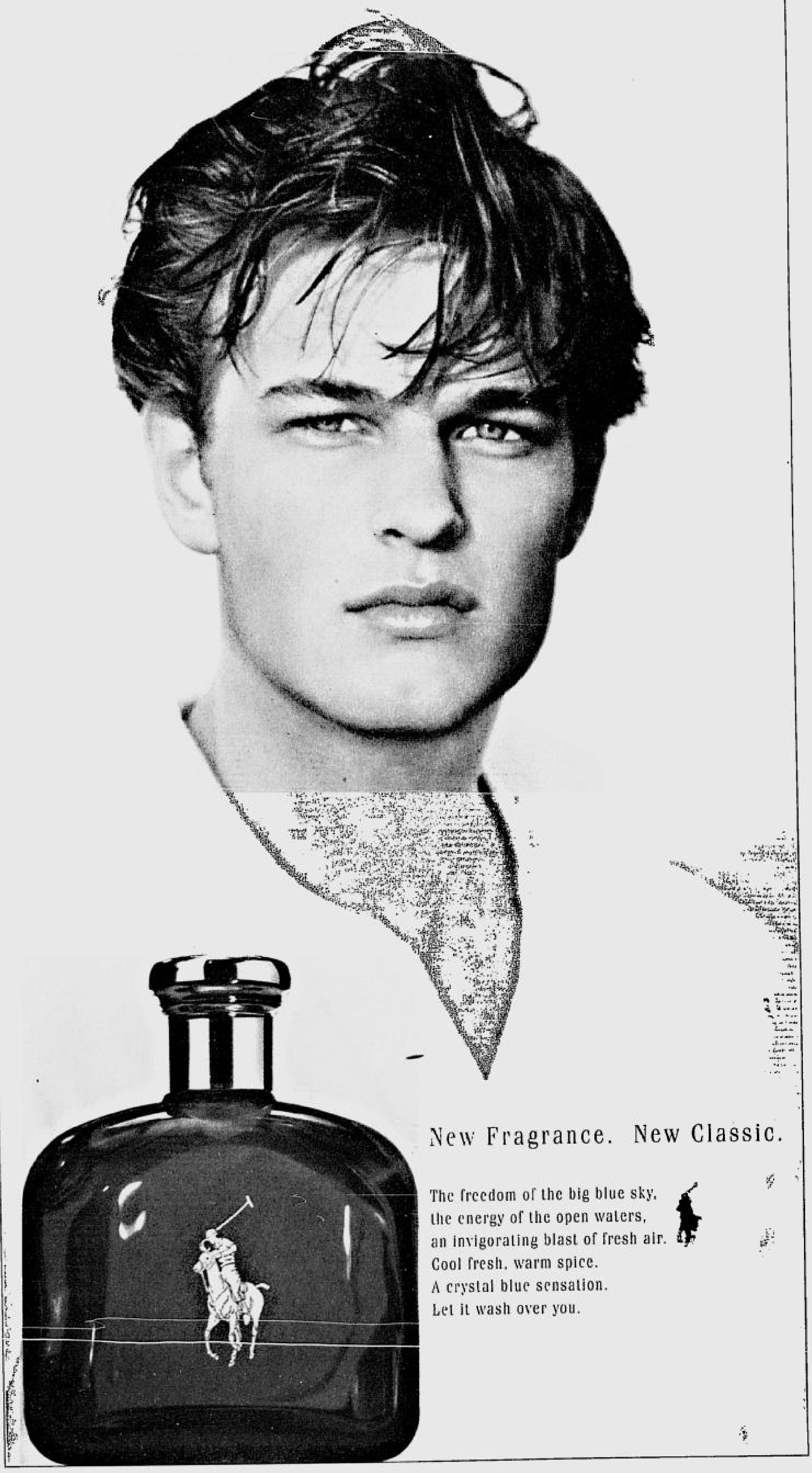
IT WAS the desire to come back home that pushed Evan to leave a very promising career abroad. "I had to choose between being successful professionally abroad while being away from my loved ones and coming home to be happy," says Evan who joined L'Oreal as the Stock Control Manager for Consumer Division in March 2003. His position in other companies is also called Inventory Planning and Control Manager. His responsibility is supply optimisation.

His experience in another multinational company helped Evan adjust easily to the working environment in L'Oreal. It was all business primarily for him. His expertise with supply planning worked to his advantage given the inventory challenges he faced.

To help Ragandang meet his business objectives, he was sent to Singapore to train for one month in another L'Oreal subsidiary. As his goals were very challenging, L'Oreal

EVAN/ 4

POLO RALPH LAUREN BLUE



New Fragrance. New Classic.

The freedom of the big blue sky,
the energy of the open waters,
an invigorating blast of fresh air.
Cool fresh, warm spice.
A crystal blue sensation.
Let it wash over you.

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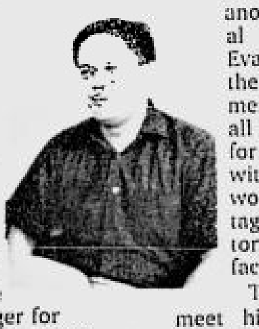
Evan P. Ragandang

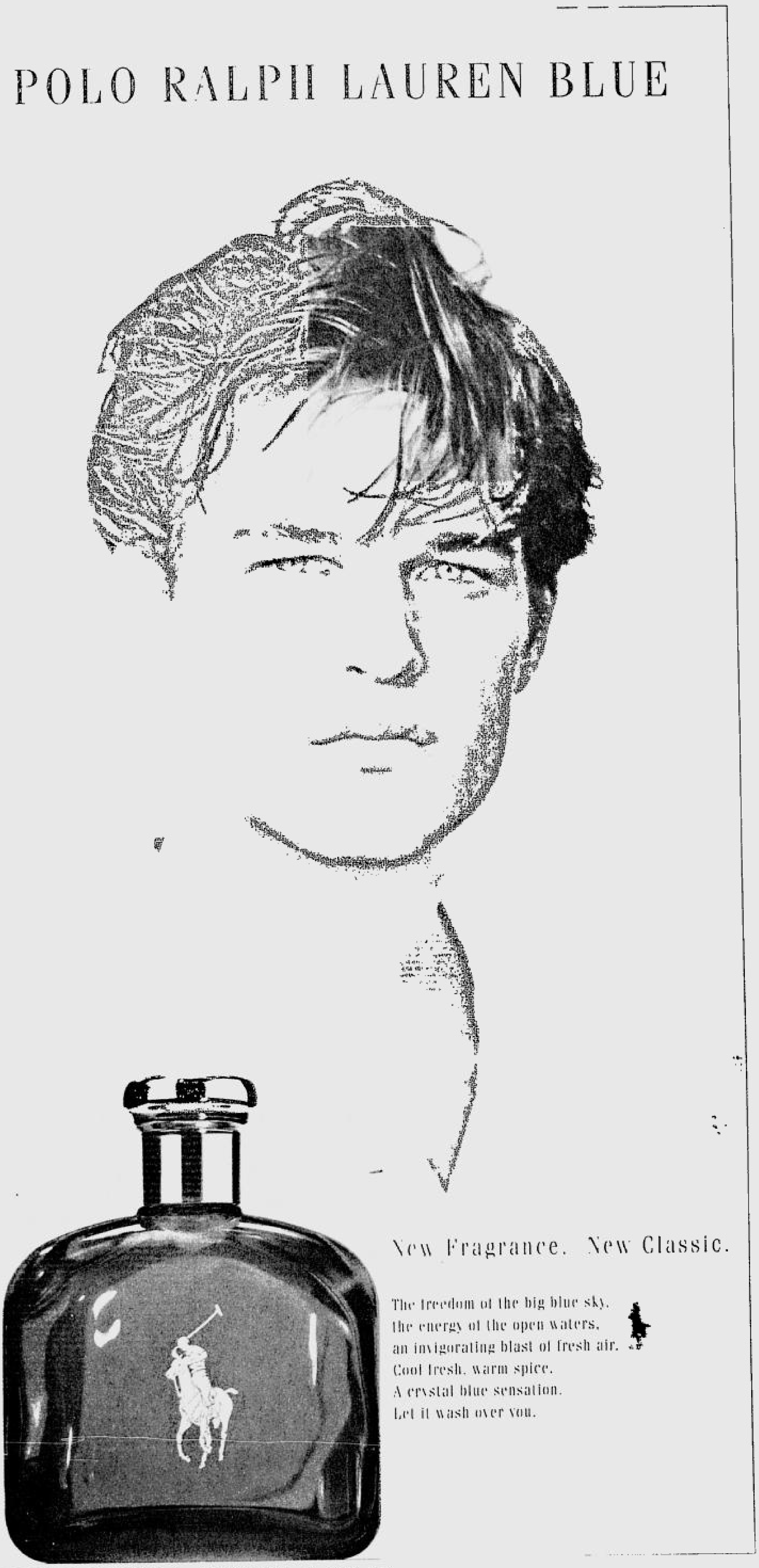


IT WAS the desire to come back home that pushed Evan to leave a very promising career abroad. "I had to choose between being successful professionally abroad while being away from my loved ones and coming home to be happy," says Evan who joined L'Oreal as the Stock Control Manager for Consumer Division in March 2003. His position in other companies is also called Inventory Planning and Control Manager. His responsibility is supply optimisation

His experience in another multinational company helped Evan adjust easily to the working environment in L'Oreal. It was all business primarily for him. His expertise with supply planning worked to his advantage given the inventory challenges he faced.

To help Ragandang meet his business objectives, he was sent to Singapore to train for one month in another L'Oreal subsidiary. As his goals were very challenging, L'Oreal

EVAN, 4



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Cool fresh, warm spice.
A crystal blue sensation.
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From page 3

wanted to make sure he had the right know-how to deliver. It was a case of "putting money where your mouth is". The investment was worth it.

By the end of this year, his team will have reduced inventories by 33 percent. Already in November, they are at their best stock levels over the last two years. And they are on their way to breaking this benchmark. Strong ownership, coupled with good know-how support provided the fuel to achieving these results even within a short period.

I didn't expect that the experience to interact with my counterparts in Asia would be as helpful as it turned out," said Ragandang. He came home better equipped - having learned L'Oreal methods and resources. Networking and developing friendships across subsidiaries is also providing help in meeting his team's goals.

Of course, it was part of the expectation to come back and train the rest of the organization here in the Philippines," he said. As a small subsidiary, L'Oreal Philippines has to find creative ways of developing its people with the resources it has.

Hans Yao

Management Trainee (4 Months)

"*Bagay sa'yo* (It fits you)" was how Hans Yao's friends reacted upon learning that he was accepted as a management trainee in L'Oreal Philippines.

It may be sheer luck or plain destiny that this Ateneo-educated young man landed a job in a company that promotes beauty inside and out. Yao admitted with all honesty that he might be described as "vain." Or more aptly, just someone who knows the value of taking care of oneself.

I am a very beauty conscious person," the bubbly Yao said.

But it is not only his being in touch with his person why Yao is now with L'Oreal family. "On the whole I am very entrepreneurial," he said.

Entrepreneuralism is very evident in L'Oreal. This is how each department as well as the whole company evolves.

The drive to succeed fills the air in the company. One thing that Yao feels is something he shares with the company.

So far he finds his life in L'Oreal to be different and challenging. Why different? For a guy to be learning about cosmetics is something that is not so common in the society. His first two weeks in the company was all about learning anything and everything about cosmetics. "I have to know what is the difference between the water-based and washable mascara," he said.

Surprisingly, Yao, despite being a fresh graduate is given much responsibility, because aside from being a management trainee, Yao also functions as an account representative for the consumers products division for key clients. "Being in sales is a very challenging job," he said.

The biggest challenge that he has experienced so far is the transition from being a student to a significant player in a multinational company. He had to adjust to a new lifestyle, new setting, and new people. But it didn't deter him from having fun with his job.

So what led him to choose work in a cosmetic company vs. other industries?

I dare to be different," he said. "I don't follow status quo."

University ties

THE MOST important asset in any business is its people. Bearing this in mind it is easy to understand why multinational companies invest a lot of money in their recruitment strategies.

When you step into the L'Oreal Office, it is difficult not to feel the energy emanating from the people. This dynamic mix is the result of careful assessment of the personal qualities of those that want to be part of the L'Oreal Corporate Office. In recruiting, we look for certain qualities, people who are innovative, entrepreneurial, leaders, achievers and have something extra special, which we call the "métier". A familiar word to those who work in L'Oreal, this means having a sensitivity to beauty, an eye and deep concern for top quality, being open to diversity and being in touch with the contemporary lifestyles and trends. And how do we find these people? For the most part by investing a lot in activities that involve universities. Letting students get to know L'Oreal and what it has to offer.

University Partnership

In L'Oreal, wherein 2/3 of the executive recruits are below 30 years old, the most important strategy would be "University Partnership". L'Oreal has roughly 450 University Partnerships in 45 countries.

The Strategies

Aside from Career days of the Universities and Corporate Presentations that gives the company the opportunity to meet with students directly, the activity that is the best is The Internship program which is carried out in majority of L'Oreal offices worldwide. Students actually get a "feel" of the work environment, getting to do the work hands-on.

L'Oreal Business Games

The company also has the L'Oreal Business Games. The objective is to use them as personalized contact with the young people internationally and help them discover L'Oreal and the beauty business world

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In the Philippines ...

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PAUL-Henri Duillet (center) with 2003 UP MBA scholars, Beth Nicolas and Richie Alayan

Nurture Master

From page 2

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Hence on day of one of your career in L'Oréal, expect to be put in a position where people will be listening to what you have to say. New recruits are expected to speak-up and give their assessment of a situation. Once in L'Oreal expect to jump right into the job and interact.

EMPOWERMENT

The feeling of being in charge is empowering in itself, said Duillet who has been with the global leader in cosmetics for over two decades. "You have to be charismatic enough to make things happen, to be able to generate a sense of adventure in L'Oréal," he said.

Naturally empowerment entails some risks and no matter how hard people try, they are bound to make mistakes. Accepting you made a mistake is one thing, the ability to digest feedback is the other side of this. Both play a significant role in enriching the entrepreneurial mentality in the company. "People should be able to accept mistakes and work on how to compensate them as soon as possible in the best interest of the company," Duillet said. L'Oreal encourages people to experiment with new ideas and take 'calculated' risks-in this company, people who dare to dream are encouraged.

BUILD ON DREAMS WITH FACTS

Dreaming is one thing but Duillet advises all incoming managers to also practice being rigorous in their approach. Always double check your facts. There may be times when consumer feedback is not what you expect it to be. If the market says it is blue, then blue it is." Says Duillet.

Quick and accurate gathering of experience is critical to be able to contribute. To do so, constant exchange with peers and superiors within the organization is expected. Furthermore, thanks to its networking facilities (intranet, regional meetings) sharing of best practices (including learnings from previous mistakes) is promoted.

"Everywhere, everyday-be curious. L'Oreal people need to be in touch with the world, and more specifically with their counterparts in other countries." Duillet adds. It is the ability to work within a network organization which matters at all levels.

NURTURING TALENTS

Coaching, or in Duillet's words nurturing, allows one's career in L'Oreal to prosper in more ways than expected.

With this premise, the regional training center of the company in Singapore, was set up to tap individual talents. "The Management Development Central (MDC) helps to train people for a new task or specialize further on their current one," Duillet explained. "And all this in having a career develop harmoniously." The point is in L'Oreal you become part of an organization in constant evolution that provides its people opportunities for different and greater empowerment everyday.

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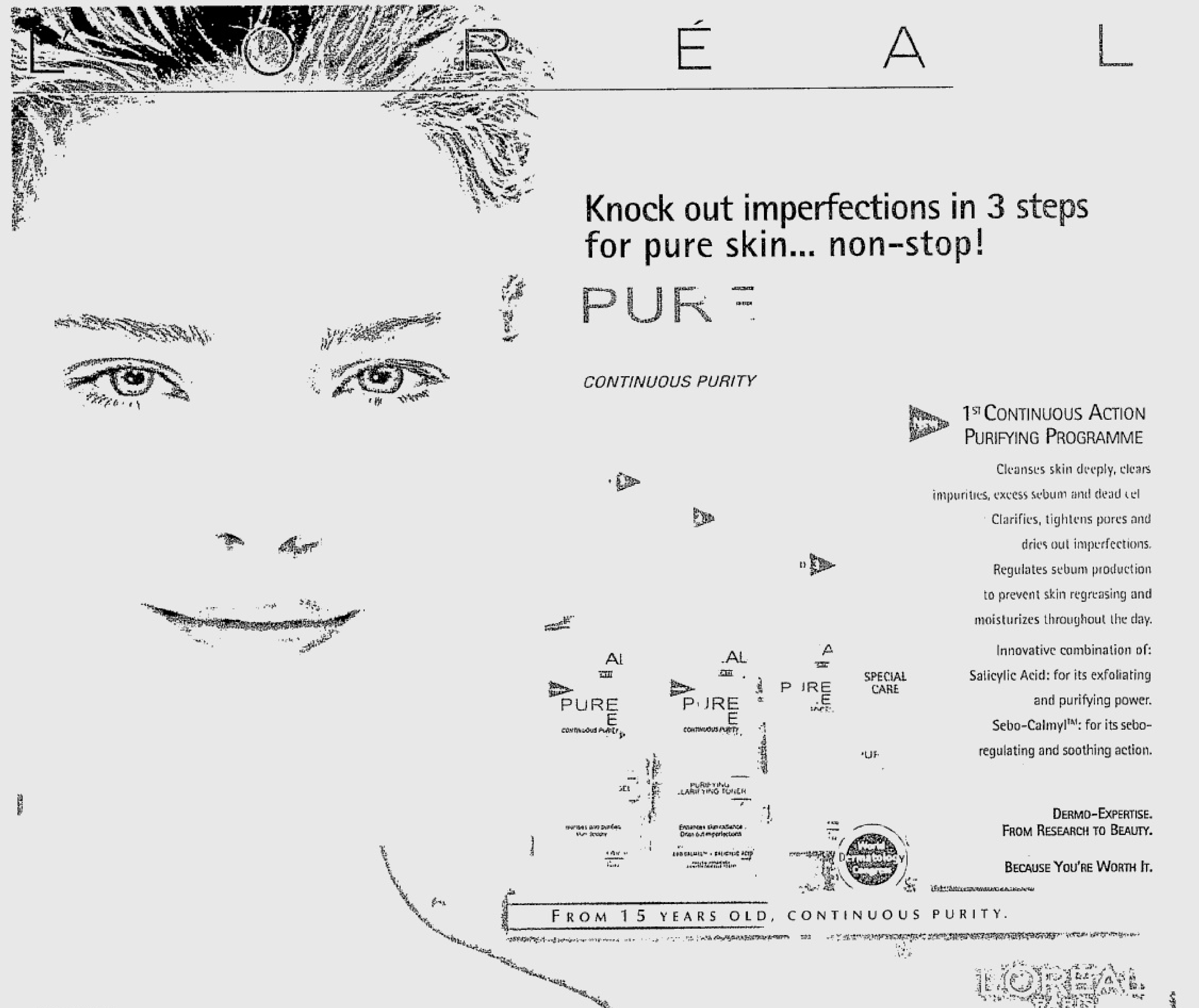
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